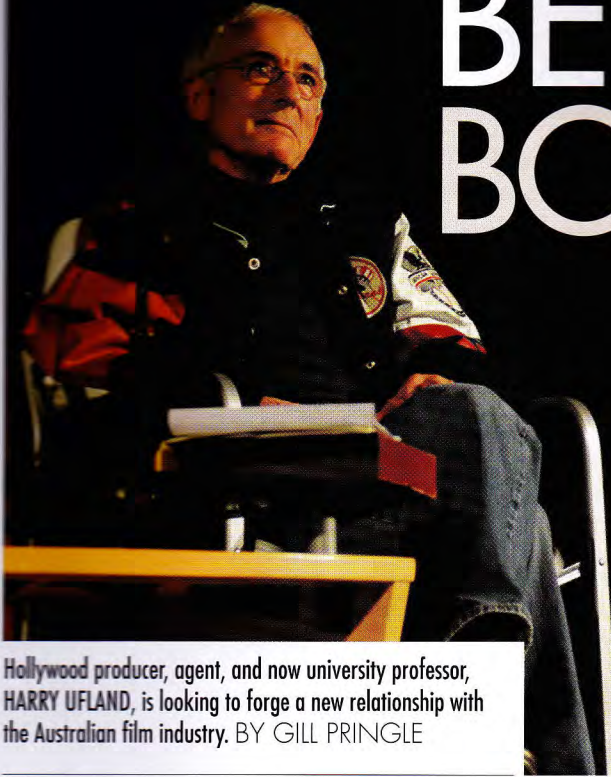




# BEYOND BORDERS



Hollywood producer, agent, and now university professor, HARRY UFLAND, is looking to forge a new relationship with the Australian film industry. BY GILL PRINGLE

**W**hen legendary Hollywood producer and agent, Harry Ufland, arrives in Sydney in early June, it will be his first visit to Australia in thirty years. "Back then, I was visiting with The Australian Film Commission, and I just found the Australians to be so nice and gracious. That stuck with me," he reminisces today. Ufland longed to return but, between producing movies and repping the likes of Martin Scorsese, Robert De Niro and Ridley Scott, there was never the right moment...until now. But this isn't some nostalgic trip down memory lane. It's actually quite the opposite, as Ufland will be accompanied by 22 of his best and brightest film students, in his capacity as professor at Chapman University's Dodge College Film School in Orange, California.

While other US film schools are looking to reach out to Asia, Europe or Bollywood, Australia was Ufland's first choice to set up what he hopes will become an annual reciprocal arrangement with The Australian Film Television And Radio School and Screen Australia. While Hollywood is often accused of forgetting that there are countries other than America, Ufland wants to learn *from* the Australian film industry. "When I was visiting Australia thirty years ago," he says, "I attended a seminar where I had to deliver my speech right after [former Hollywood studio boss] Mike Medavoy. And I told the audience, 'Everything that he told you was shit, and I want to set the record straight.' This was the time of Peter Weir, Bruce Beresford, and Gillian Armstrong. These guys were making great movies, and Mike was telling them to come and make Hollywood movies. And I said, 'That's crazy advice. You want to make *your* movies. It doesn't matter whether you make them in Hollywood or not, but they should always be *your* movies, and not somebody else's,'" says Ufland, who has co-produced such diverse fare as *The Last Temptation Of Christ*, *Snow Falling On Cedars* and most recently *The Big Wedding*, and still remains a force in the industry, and a regular collaborator with Scorsese. "I always thought that the Australians had so much to say through their

films, and I've remained a great fan of Australian cinema," says Ufland.

As much as anything, it's a former student of Ufland's who inadvertently became a source of inspiration for this ambitious venture when he opted to spend a year in Australia working in the film industry, rather than immediately applying to a Hollywood training programme after graduating Ufland's class. "He recently returned from Australia, and three big Hollywood agencies were literally fighting over him – all because of this experience that he'd gained in Australia. He's now signed on with ICM's training programme," Ufland says, discussing his young protégé, Patrick Gooing. "As you can imagine, thousands of students apply for these training programmes and it was, without doubt, Patrick's enterprise in going to Australia to learn about the business that made him stand out."

After a lifetime of working with Hollywood's top talent, and packaging such iconic films as *Raging Bull*, *Blade Runner*, *Mean Streets* and *The Duellists*, Ufland's second act as a film professor took him somewhat by surprise. "My 21-year-old son is studying at university, and I thought that it would be wonderful if I was a teacher at the same time – although not at the same schools!" says Ufland, who'd been a guest speaker at Chapman for several years, culminating in his being invited to talk at a special presentation of *Taxi Driver*. "I'd represented Jodie Foster, Robert De Niro, Martin Scorsese and Harvey Keitel, and I'd had a lot to do with that movie. Afterwards, there was a really stimulating Q&A, and it inspired me to take that final leap to teaching film classes – but only on my own terms," says the producer, whose courses include "Exercise Your Creativity" and "Mentor/ Internship." "Our visit to Australia will be mutually beneficial for both the Australian and the American film industry – forging long-lasting bonds between our cinemas for both now and the future. It's an exciting step in opening up a dialogue between the next generation of American and Australian filmmakers." ■