



STUDYGUIDE

The

IMAX

Experience[®]

BIG FILMS, BIG STORIES



IMAX

ENTERTAINMENT THAT ILLUMINATES

THE IMAX DIFFERENCE

IMAX is the largest and most exciting film format in the world. With crystal clear images, ten times larger than traditional cinema format, the IMAX experience draws you in with pictures so real you want to touch them, so powerful you can feel them.

The screens in IMAX Theatres are the biggest in the world. Up to eight storeys high, they fill the whole field of human vision. Made of stretched vinyl, coated with a reflective silver paint, they are stretched taut over a scaffold frame. With thousands of small perforations they allow sound from speakers positioned behind the screen to play their key role in the total surround sound system.

THE THIRD DIMENSION

If your idea of a 3D film is a pair of cheap cardboard glasses with green and red cellophane for lenses it's time to think again. IMAX® 3D is state-of-the-art technology which takes the 3D film experience in a whole new direction.

3D technology is based on human vision. It mimics the way we see the



real world. When you look at an object each eye sees a slightly different view and our brain fuses these together into a single 3D image.

The two lenses on the IMAX® 3D camera roughly match the distance between our eyes and so each lens "sees" a slightly different view. The images are photographed onto two separate rolls of film—corresponding to a right eye and left eye image—which run simultaneously through

DID YOU KNOW?

The IMAX Theatre in Sydney has the world's largest 2D IMAX screen. The IMAX Theatre in Melbourne has the largest 3D screen image.

Sydney screen: 29m x 36m
Melbourne screen: 26m x 31m

Sound is critical to the IMAX experience. The film soundtracks are delivered through a mighty 15,000 watt digital surround sound system. The IMAX six channel, high fidelity, motion picture sound system with sub bass plays off three separate CDs each carrying two tracks.



FROM TOP: IMAX 2D CAMERA; IMAX 3D CAMERA; HOW 3D POLARISED GLASSES WORK





definition and clarity of the huge film frames. These huge film frames are the key to an IMAX experience. Three times larger than traditional 70mm frames, they have pushed the quality of motion picture images to new heights (quite literally).

Conventional films are shot on 35mm film. Large format films are shot on two main varieties of 70mm film:

8/70 and 15/70. 8/70 films are set up vertically with eight perforations per frame, while 15/70 film is set up horizontally with fifteen perforations per frame.

the camera. These two films are then alternately projected in the theatre. The shutters on the projector alternate between left and right images ninety-six times per second.

Since the beginning of large film technology in the early 1970s, half a billion people throughout the world have enjoyed a large format film experience.

JUST HOW BIG IS BIG?

IMAX is the largest film format in existence; ten times larger than standard 35mm format. Large format films can only be projected successfully onto the huge IMAX screen because of the amazing high

3D DID YOU KNOW?

The basic technology for 'stereoscopic cinema' has been around for more than a century. When French movie theatre pioneers Auguste Lumiere and Lois Lumiere screened what is believed to be the first publicly shown 3D movie, a short black-and-white film called 'L'Arrivee du Train'. The film showed a locomotive appearing to steam right through the screen, which by some accounts was too realistic for early movie audiences who fled from their seats! The first 3D Hollywood film, a melodrama called 'Bwana Devil' was produced in 1952, prompting a wave of films.

The basis of the IMAX system is a camera negative that is 65mm wide (or high in IMAX terms since the film runs transversely) and travels at



ABOVE LEFT: 3D THEATRE ABOVE RIGHT: THE IMAX 3D EXPERIENCE RIGHT: FILM COMPARISON TOP- 35MM FILM. CENTRE- 5 PERF/70MM FILM BOTTOM: 15 PERF/70MM FILM.





1.71m per second! Each border has fifteen perforations and each frame of film image measures 70 x 50mm – a ratio of 1.4 to 1. This provides an image that is almost ten times the area but rather more square than the Panavision 2.35 to 1 frame.

A reel of IMAX film is generally over a metre in diameter, weighs about 80kg and is lifted onto the projection platters with a fork lift.

THE ROLLING LOOP

To project such large films, IMAX have built powerful, high precision projectors with a unique 'Rolling Loop' film movement. This rolling loop movement is crucial to reliable projection and provides superior performance by

advancing the film horizontally in a smooth, wave-like motion.

During projection, each frame is positioned on a fixed registration point and the film is held firmly against the rear element of the lens by a vacuum. This ensures that the screen image and steadiness exceed normal standards, providing outstanding image clarity.

The rolling-loop system was invented by Australian engineer Ron Jones. It began in 1969 when Jones delivered a paper on his revolutionary 'rolling-loop' projector. Instead of the mechanical pull-down claw that had been around since Edison's time, or the improved but still 'violent' Maltese Cross movement that moved the film in a stop-go motion, Jones'

3D DID YOU KNOW?

The 15,000 watt IMAX lamp is exceptionally bright. (Some say that it is so bright that it could be seen with the naked eye from the International Space Station!) The heat generated by these lamps is so intense they need to be water-cooled; they are made of quartz and filled with pressurised xenon gas which can be very dangerous, and in extreme cases can explode with incredible force.

idea was to move the film across the projector's gate in a series of waves. The film perforations were to be used to guide each film frame onto fixed registration pins for its moment of illumination, rather than pulling the film intermittently. The wave shape is formed by air pressure, with each frame held against the rear of the lens by a vacuum. This provides the amazing image steadiness.

IMAX was first shown publicly at the 1970 World's Fair in Osaka. Ron Jones has since died, but his invention lives on in the 70mm IMAX motion picture format.

IMAX CORPORATION

Based in Canada, IMAX® Corporation is a leading manufacturer of large



LEFT: INSIDE THE IMAX PROJECTION BOOTH



format theatre systems, cameras and projectors for what is generically known as the large format industry. IMAX produces and distributes many large format film titles, however most have been produced by independent producers, including filmmakers in Australia.

For more information on IMAX® Corporation, visit www.imax.com

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE IMAX INDUSTRY

IMAX has recently moved into producing films in different genres and with new technology.

Digital Technology

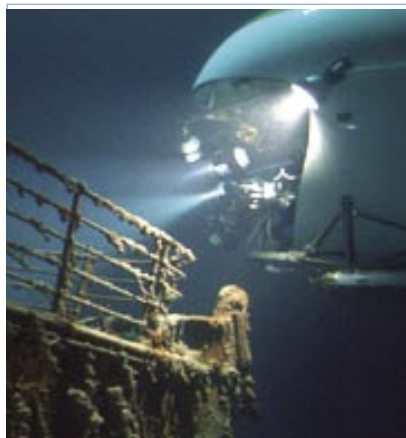
Technology has advanced to the point where large format films can be now be shot using high definition digital technology.

Director James Cameron was one of the first to use this digital approach in the film *Titanic 3D: Ghosts of the Abyss* with excellent results. Using HD digital enabled Cameron greater flexibility in capturing images in challenging situations (ie. the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, 4km down!).

Digital technology has also been used to 'blow up' traditional 35mm films to the giant screen and is known within the large format industry as DMR (or digital re-mastering).

The IMAX DMR technology scans a 35mm film frame digitally, enhances it, and enlarges it to 70mm. The quality of the film can be improved through this digital process, thus enabling projection onto giant IMAX screens. The image re-mastering process takes about 14 weeks for a feature length film, at a cost of about US\$4 million.

Feature films that have been digitally re-mastered using this new DMR technology include Disney's *Fantasia*, *Lion King* and *Beauty & the Beast*, *Apollo 13*, *Treasure Planet*, *Star Wars*



Episode II Attack of the Clones, Matrix II and III, with many more to come.

Live Action Drama Made For The Giant Screen

Young Black Stallion is the first Disney film produced specifically for the giant IMAX screen. Unlike most IMAX films, which are documentaries, *Young Black Stallion* is a live-action children's adventure story, featuring a dramatic script and a cast of actors. It is a 'prequel' to the 1979 Disney classic film 'Black Stallion'.

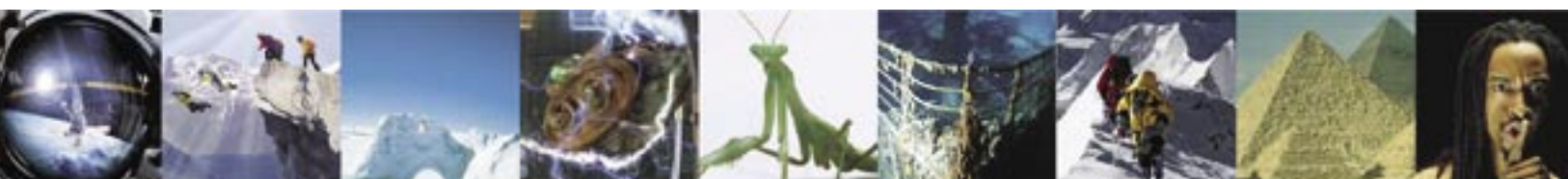
The following extract from the film's production notes features an interview

TOP-BOTTOM: DISNEY'S *LION KING* WAS ENLARGED AND ENHANCED FOR THE GIANT SCREEN USING NEW OMR TECHNOLOGY; *TITANIC 3D: GHOSTS OF THE ABYSS*; *YOUNG BLACK STALLION*

with Director Simon Wincer and Cinematographer Reed Smoot:

Shooting on large format did require a certain amount of adaptation on the part of the filmmakers. 'Large format is incredibly challenging,' says Simon Wincer. 'The composition is quite different because the camera sees such a huge area and it's very hard to isolate characters in dialogue scenes, therefore, you have to stage it in a slightly more theatrical way.'

To a large extent Wincer had to trust director of photography Reed Smoot, a veteran large format filmmaker, when it came to the positioning of shots because of the subject movement within the frame. 'It is difficult to capture intimacy on large format because the screen is so large', says Smoot. 'The challenge is to combine the format, the story and the locations, and in this film we have a wonderful story, spectacular locations and a great format with which to capture this.'



BEFORE YOUR IMAX EXPERIENCE

About the Documentary Format

Before viewing a film we usually have some idea of the type of film we will be seeing. Usually we will have heard about the film from other people, seen previews on TV or during previous visits to the cinema or have read advertisements and posters. When viewing a documentary we usually expect to find out something and hope it is presented in an interesting or entertaining way.

Many IMAX films are documentaries. A documentary 'documents' something or puts it on record. A documentary usually claims to present factual information about the world. To achieve this, particular codes and conventions are used. A documentary may present interviews or 'talking heads', maps, graphs and charts, live footage, historical footage and may even present re-enactments.

ACTIVITY

- Make a class list of documentaries students have viewed.

As with fiction films, many documentaries are also narratives. A narrative is described as 'a chain of events in cause-effect relationship occurring in time and space' (Bordwell and Thompson).

A narrative usually begins with a situation, a number of changes then take place following a cause and effect pattern and then a new or different situation concludes the narrative. The narrative form selects, shapes and interprets images for the audience to stimulate interest and create a sense of coherence. At times, a number of narrative threads may run through a film.

One way of describing styles of documentaries is to divide them into categorical or rhetorical forms:

Categorical Documentary: Claims to convey information, usually in a straightforward and direct manner. Some features of typical categorical documentaries are:

- Narrator present as voice over
- Tone of objectivity

Rhetorical Documentary: Often presents an argument and attempts to persuade an audience to accept this viewpoint. Some features of typical rhetorical documentaries are:

- Openly addressing the viewer in order to persuade
- Facts are supplemented by appeals to emotion

ACTIVITY

- Use a dictionary to record the meanings of categorical and rhetorical.
- Group the documentaries listed earlier as either categorical or rhetorical. Provide reasons for your grouping.
- Do the documentaries fit easily into these categories or are there some that have elements of both?

As with other media forms, a documentary represents reality through the elements of selection, construction and representation. These elements work together to represent reality in a way that is different from direct experience of that reality. As we gain experience as viewers, we realize that a filmmaker selects certain images to show us and that these images have been edited together, or constructed, in a way that will present particular ideas. Thus the filmmaker, to some extent, is presenting us with what he or she wants us to see; that is, their representation of the subject matter of the film.

ACTIVITY

- As a class, discuss the similarities and differences between an IMAX documentary, compared with other documentaries you have viewed? You may want to consider the

following to inform your ideas:

- Images are up to eight storeys high and ten times larger and much clearer than the traditional cinema format.
- The state-of-the art digital surround-sound system creates sound effects that are more realistic, powerful and encompassing than conventional films.
- Most films are shown within a frame so we are always aware of our own physical place and that what is created in front of us is an illusion. The IMAX screen extends beyond our vision and so the sense of framing disappears increasing our sense of being in the movie. This feeling is enhanced when the movie is in 3D.
- It takes several seconds for the eye to adjust when you cut from a distant subject to a very close subject. This slows down the pace of a film as sudden editing cuts can not work effectively.
- The cameras are unable to zoom.
- Film is extremely expensive and cameras carry only three minutes of footage.
- The cameras are bulky, weighty, very noisy and take a comparatively long time to load.
- Search the internet to discover more about IMAX films and current trends within the large format industry. Visit sites such as
 - www.bigmoviezone.com (Large format industry & films)
 - www.imax.com (IMAX Corporation)
 - www.imax.com.au (Australian IMAX Theatres - Sydney & Melbourne)

AFTER VIEWING AN IMAX FILM

ACTIVITY

- After viewing an IMAX film discuss the similarities and differences between it and other documentaries. Does the IMAX documentary use the narrative form to convey ideas? If so, how does it do this? Could you describe the documentary as rhetorical or categorical? If so, why



would you describe it this way?

- Write a review of the IMAX film you have viewed. Begin by recording the film's title, a description of the film, the Director's name and the duration (length) of the film. In your review consider:
 - What are the key messages, meanings or stories told by the film?
 - What would the filmmaker have considered to be of particular interest or special?
 - How reliable are the sources of information provided?
 - Is the narrator male or female? What tone of voice is used?
 - Is the narrator authoritative?
 - What points of view are considered?
 - What types of evidence are provided to support these points of view?
 - Does the film appeal to the emotions of viewers? If so, how

does it do this?

- What choices were made about the content selected for the film? What content was excluded? How do these choices affect the messages and meanings conveyed by the film?
- How does the camerawork contribute to the film?
- Does the editing achieve an appropriate pace? Have the shots been put together in an effective way?
- How does the large screen format contribute to the messages and meanings being conveyed?
- Does the film convey an important story or message?

IS BIG ALWAYS BETTER?

Screen size and its accompanying technology lends itself to certain genres of information and entertainment better than others.

For example, the filming of vast expanses of landscape is more effective on the large rather than the small screen whereas facial close-ups are more appropriate for the small screen in keeping with their size in real life.

ACTIVITY

In the table below, choose a genre of film that is most suitable for a particular screen size. Give the film a title, outline what it is about and the reason you believe that film is best shown on the screen size you have chosen.

Some genres to start your thinking: Epic; Social realism; Romantic Comedy; Western; Science Fiction; Interview; Reality Cinema/ TV; Horror; Wild life documentary ...

SCREEN	GENRE	TITLE	OUTLINE	REASON
IMAX				
Movie				
TV				



ABOVE: THE JAMES CAIRD AS FEATURED IN SHACKLETON'S ANTARCTIC ADVENTURE.



COMPARING THE IMAX EXPERIENCE TO TELEVISION

Case Study: *Shackleton's Antarctic Adventure*

A good way to see the effect of screen size and technology on content is to compare Charles Sturridge's docudrama, *Shackleton* (available through ABC Shops, starring Kenneth Branagh) with the IMAX film,

Shackleton's Antarctic Adventure.

ACTIVITY

- Divide students into groups, each choosing a particular section from the story as represented by both films to highlight the similarities and differences. Provide students with an empty table to complete such as the one below.



TYPICAL FEATURE	IMAX: "SHACKLETON'S ANTARCTIC ADVENTURE"	TELEVISION: "SHACKLETON"
LENGTH	This 40 minute film focuses on the physical endurance and heroism.	2 episodes of 1 hour each to encompass the complexity of the human and social.
CAMERA SHOTS	Long shot with stable camera panning with wide angle/ camera on aircraft	Wide range of camera shots and angles. Cutting and intercutting for contrast
POINT OF VIEW	Overview, the position of omniscient narrator in realist novels. The human scale is very small in comparison with the vastness of the landscape – invites awe and wonder at nature and heroic achievement.	Occasional overview interspersed with mid range and many close-ups. The focus is on the human, physical hardship and personal responses and relationships. The last of these, consistent with the intimate setting of the home viewer, invites personal identification.
CHARACTERISATION	Presents a consistent and simplistic view of Shackleton as the explorer hero– typical of adventure genre where actions of characters are more important than thoughts or words.	Shackleton seen in the context of his society and relationships with different people – his wife, his mistress, his co-explorers. The nature of his heroism is depicted in its quality and complexity.
SETTING	Outdoor shots of landscape maximising the unique splendour of the Antarctic. Use of original photographs to enhance authenticity.	A preponderance of interior shots despite the subject matter of the outdoor experience. Variety and contrast with the great expanse gained through range of internal settings and London scenes. These also remind the viewer of the wider context, particularly that of a nation at war.
READING PROCESS	Overwhelming size of screen and power of sound has the effect of immersing the viewer in a total experience stimulating all the senses through visual, sound and kinaesthetic images. These, coupled with the linear narrative and authoritative voice-over, demand that the viewer accept the text as a representation of the 'real world' and attempt to minimise our awareness of the film as a mediated construction. The viewer is positioned as submissive consumer.	More opportunity to for alternative reading positions as the medium is less overwhelming and the text more complex. The portrayal of characters and their interactions gives more scope for negotiation of meaning but the clear heroic casting of Shackleton makes this a fairly limited exercise. Nonetheless questions arise about the role of women and the contrast between the purpose and values of the expedition and the purpose and the values of that even greater undertaking, the war.



IN FOCUS ... AUSTRALIAN LARGE FORMAT FILMMAKERS

IMAX Corporation produce a limited number of films each year, with the bulk of film production being carried out by a wide range of independent filmmakers, many in association with large educational and cultural institutions.

A number of well-known Australian filmmakers have also produced and directed large format films, most notably, John Weilly (Heliograph Motion Pictures), Michael Caulfield (Mullion Creek Productions) and David & Sue Flatman (Living Pictures) and Simon Wincer. Like all films, there's a crew of people involved behind the scenes and Australians have also been well represented on large format productions in areas such as music, photography and sound.

DAVID FLATMAN Director, *Australia: Land Beyond Time*

As a pilot, David Flatman has enjoyed many breathtaking moments flying over the outback plains of Australia. From the moment Flatman first saw an IMAX film he wondered how he could bring his unique aerial perspective of Australia to the screen, in a way that would capture the vastness and



beauty of this country.

Flatman set about achieving his goal by building a twin-engine aircraft that could carry an IMAX camera, mounted upon the aircraft's nose. Then, with his team, he captured Australia's diverse landscapes and unique life forms.

ACTIVITY

- After viewing the film, *Australia: Land Beyond Time*, discuss whether you believe David Flatman captured the 'vastness' of Australia in this IMAX film. Imagine viewing the same images on a traditional cinema screen or on television. What is the effect?
- Read brochures promoting IMAX films and conduct internet searches to find out the titles and descriptions of as many other IMAX films as possible. What things do IMAX films have in common, other than the size of the film and the screen size? Make a list of ideal locations or topics for IMAX films. Give reasons to support your choices.
- Conduct a class debate: 'The filmmaker is not presenting a true picture of Australia, rather he is presenting us with what he wants us to see.'
- Visit the web site <http://films.hmns.org/aussie/making.htm> to find out about some of the challenges involved in filming in Australia's harsh outback terrain, and how these challenges were overcome.

TOP: DAVID FLATMAN BELOW: AN 'IMAX MOMENT' PERFECTLY CAPTURED BY DAVID FLATMAN IN AUSTRALIA: *LAND BEYOND TIME*

THE 'IMAX MOMENT'

Most IMAX films feature a classic 'moment' which can only be truly captured by the immense size and scale of the IMAX screen. It could be a dazzling landscape panorama, a stampede of a herd of animals or some other remarkable human or natural spectacle.

On the website <http://films.hmns.org/aussie/making.htm> David Flatman talks about capturing some true 'IMAX moments'. For example, he says, 'It was always my dream to capture the outback in both drought and flood, and then to record the explosion of life that follows these rare and unpredictable rains.'

When David and the crew reached Lake Eyre hoping to find a colony of breeding pelicans, they were astonished to find more than a million pelicans. Since this only happens once or twice every century he says, 'We all knew at this instant we had captured a true IMAX moment.'

ACTIVITY

- List four or five aspects of *Australia: Land Beyond Time* that you think qualify as true 'IMAX moments'. As a class, share lists and discuss what it is that makes something an 'IMAX moment'.
- Based on your knowledge of large-format film-making, write a 'pitch' to a company such as the IMAX Corporation, selling your ideas for an IMAX film. Be sure to explain why this topic would make a good IMAX film and how the large format would help to convey messages or tell the story effectively. What would be your 'true IMAX moments'?

(See overleaf for interview with David Flatman.)



In *Australia: Land Beyond Time*, innovative filmmakers from Australian production company Living Pictures drew upon a variety of creative skills to overcome obstacles in order to bring Australia's land and its animals to life. In this interview, Director David Flatman speaks about his documentary making career and his experiences making IMAX films.

Describe your film-related background.

I started as a journalist in radio in the early 1960s, then worked in television as a current affairs reporter. My first documentary job was producing and filming my own spot on live television called the Channel Nine's Newsreel, a weekly update of news around town of interest to young people. Later, I worked on ABC Television as a reporter, producer, writer, director and presenter of stories about people and our land. One of the programs I worked on was *A Big Country*, about people and life outside the cities. From there I started my own production company in the early 1980s and with my wife Sue, have made independent documentaries for film and television for the last twenty years.

What previous involvement have you had with large format films? What was your first involvement with large format?

I co-produced the IMAX film *Antarctica* with John Weiley, who directed the film. It was released in 1991 and became one of the most successful large format films made to that time.

Explain what you see as the role of a film director.

The director creates and controls the making of the individual sequences that, when assembled together, also under his/her control, become the complete film. The director of a documentary film (like *Antarctica* or *Australia:*

Land Beyond Time) selects the locations and the situations that will be recorded as they happen, and supervises the filming of each individual sequence in accordance with the treatment or script of the film. I usually write the scripts for the films I direct.

What are the key differences in directing an IMAX film compared with a 'traditional' sized film?

The sheer size of the image recorded on large format film makes it possible to project the world's largest and highest resolution motion pictures on the giant IMAX screen which, on average, is ten times as big as a normal 35mm film screen. This means the audience can see much more in a single scene. The lenses are fixed (not 'zoom' lenses), and usually wide angle, which means the camera must be as close to the subject as possible. The camera is also very noisy, and this causes problems when filming small wild animals (and even large ones) that very easily take fright when confronted by a big, noisy box carried by a couple of people. This means a lot of patience is needed when directing a large format film—often one scene can take all day or even longer to film.

How did Australia: Land Beyond Time come about? How long did this film take to complete?

This film was created in my mind the first time I saw the breathtaking images in an IMAX film on the giant screen. I realized then that this was the best way to see our vast continent—a feeling that is almost like being there, in the midst of the picture. It took many years to raise the money and get the film into production, and when we finished the film, we had been working on it full-time for three years. The support of many investors who were interested in seeing our great continent on the giant screen, both in Australia and

North America, as well as one in Europe, made it possible.

How is this film different from other IMAX films?

It is the only large format film entirely about Australia and the unique life that makes this land different from every other continent on Earth.

What inspired your treatment of Australia: Land Beyond Time?

A desire to convey the beauty, the mystery and the genius of this continent and the amazing life that has met and overcome every challenge nature could throw at it, in order to survive in one of the world's toughest places.

Do you consider this film to be a documentary? What do you mean by your response?

Yes. It documents life as it unfolds in ways that many people would not have the opportunity to see in a lifetime, and which has been going on for millions of years.

In what way does the format contribute to the meanings, messages or stories in the large format films you have directed?

The large format is the next best thing to being there—and being there is the best way to experience a place or a time. In Australia, it contributes to a feeling of vastness, isolation and ingenuity of life that characterize this place. The scale of the images and their reality convey this continent on the screen with uncanny realism.

What was most difficult in a technical sense about achieving what you wanted with this film?

Being in the right place at the right time as nature unfolded her story of this land, and recording it with the most cumbersome and awkward tools available made this an exciting, frustrating and satisfying challenge.



What other obstacles needed to be overcome?

Covering the entire continent in a limited time with a couple of truck loads of bulky equipment and carrying them into almost inaccessible places was a constant obstacle.

What do you hope viewers take away from Australia: Land Beyond Time?

A better understanding of their world and how fantastically interesting it is. (And) from this better knowledge, an increased level of caring for the wonderful treasures nature has given us.

Are there things you would like to try with large format films that you haven't yet tried?

Oh yes. There are still many good stories to be told in the large format that cannot be told as well in any other medium. One thing would be to recreate some fictional stories in the reality of the giant screen, in 3D, if possible.

What is a dream you have about film-making?

To one day make a film that will be remembered and valued after I am gone.

What advice do you have for aspiring young filmmakers?

No matter how hard, difficult, or impossible it seems, follow your dream to tell the stories you want to tell. Nothing succeeds like persistence, and nothing is more valuable than a hard-won prize—the prize of knowledge that comes with a good story.





ABOVE: *EVEREST*: ONE OF THE TOP GROSSING IMAX FILMS OF ALL TIME
 RIGHT: THE IMAX 'MOMENT' AS CAPTURED IN AUSTRALIA: *LAND BEYOND TIME*

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Web sites

www.imax.com
 IMAX Corporation

www.imax.com.au
 Australian IMAX Theatres

www.bigmoviezone.com
 Industry comment, new films, trailers etc



www.giantscreenbiz.com
 Industry news & comment
 (subscriber only)

www.1570.com
 Large format motion picture network

www.giantscreentheater.com
 Giant Screen Theatre Association

This study guide was written by Julie Brown (IMAX, Sydney) and Christine Evely, (ACMI), with contributions from Jane Susak (IMAX Melbourne) and Eva Gold (ETANSW).

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Contact details



IMAX Theatre Melbourne
Rathdowne St, Carlton Gardens
CARLTON VIC 3053
Education Office:
Ph: 03 9663 0200
Fax: 03 9663 0300
Email: jsusak@imax.com.au



LG IMAX Theatre Sydney
31 Wheat Rd
DARLING HARBOUR NSW 2000
Education Office:
Ph: 02 9213 1600
Fax: 02 9281 3833
Email: sydggroups@imax.com.au

