

## From science to world-wide film success



### Eve Ash

**Course graduated from:** BSc (Hons) majoring in psychology

**Year of graduation:** 1973

**Job:** Film-maker, author, public speaker

**Career:** Graduate clerk, vocational psychologist, training officer, Australian Government Department of Employment; founder and CEO of Seven Dimensions; co-founder (with Peter Quarry) of Ash.Quarry Productions

**Reflection:** "It's about being accurate about the past and the present so you can have a better impact on the future."

**"I thought 'I'm going to become a producer and do far better than you've ever done!'"**

Award-winning filmmaker Eve Ash grimaces as she recalls the narrow options available when she chose her psychology honours project back in 1972.

"Now I can think of a thousand projects that I could have done," she says. "But then it was like 'You could do 'ergonomics' with such-and-such, or you could do 'perception' with such and such.' What was missing was a brainstorming session where you can develop your thoughts."

In the end, she opted for a study of employee "moonlighting". It's a topic that, with hindsight, now looks like an ideal first step by a student who, a mere seven years later, was running her own film company, Seven Dimensions, and beginning to cement her status as the pioneer of comedy workplace training films in Australia.

#### John Cleese inspires career move

Inspired by the legendary John ("Fawlty Towers") Cleese, Ash employed the cream of Australia's comedy and creative talent, including John Clarke, Ian McFadyen, Peter Moon, Graeme Blundell, Julie McGregor and Ted Robinson to make films on topics from job interviews to time management.

She now has more than 500 business training, health and educational films, videos and television episodes to her credit, and shoots her workplace films in the US, distributing them all over the world, from Egypt to South Africa and Hong Kong. She has also won more than 140 international awards for creativity and excellence, including top honours at the New York Film and TV Festival.

Ash was fortunate that her first job after graduation, with the Australian Government's Department of Employment, enabled her to develop her interest in workplace psychology. She began by researching industry training, and running training sessions. By 1978 she had begun suggesting that her department make training films, which were shot by outside organisations, such as Film Australia, but co-ordinated by Ash.

"Once you've got a science background or degree, if you're interested in doing things, you can actually generate projects – make suggestions and run with them. You can say 'Why aren't we doing research on this? Or 'How about if we did that?'"

One spur for her to form her own company came from a Film Australia producer who said she was so good in

her production supervisory role that she could have a career in the film industry – as a production assistant!

"I thought 'I'm going to become a producer and do far better than you've ever done!'" she recalls.

#### Monash degree assists film production

Her Monash major in physiology and minor in biochemistry have been helpful when Ash has made films about AIDS, sexual health, MS and aging.

In the meantime she has discovered a passion for forensic science, shooting educational videos on forensic evidence, expert evidence and related topics, and making a feature, Shadow Of Doubt, about the case of Tasmanian woman Sue Neill-Fraser, who is currently in jail after being convicted of the murder of her husband. In Ash's view – and in the view of several eminent local defence lawyers – Neill-Fraser has been the victim of a terrible miscarriage of justice.

"My science background has really helped me come to grips with a lot of the forensic issues in this case. It also helps you to communicate with a lot of other professionals ... from engineers to mathematicians and doctors. That really helps."

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