

big name, no mobile



MITJILI GIBSON, KIARA GIBSON – WITH WARWICK THORNTON ON THE SET OF NANA. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MARK ROGERS.

Spurred by his Melbourne Airport Emerging Australian Filmmaker Award, director and writer Warwick Thornton is currently doing what he should. Making films in Alice Springs and refusing to talk with reporters! **Helen Razer** looks on at his work in awe.

Each year, the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) heaps bounty and its bruises upon the city.

Film junkies and casual visitors alike are rewarded with stirring images transported from Nigeria or Alaska or just down the road. And everyone who attends, having seen so many films ahead of release date, can pose as David Stratton and Margaret Pomeranz.

Attend the winter festival and you won't be short of dinner party chat.



2007 MELBOURNE AIRPORT EMERGING AUSTRALIAN FILMMAKER AWARD WINNER, WARWICK THORNTON.

coveted Melbourne Airport Emerging Australian Filmmaker Award at MIFF for his work *Nana*.

This short tracks the progress of a redoubtable and charming grandmother who slays lizards, traps a wallaby and metes out justice to nocturnal drunks. Her grand-daughter watches in awe as *Nana* sells the same painting over and over to tourists.

When the airport caught up with Warwick after his award, he agreed that full-fledged characters always form the centre of his work.

"Humanity, a good story," inspires Thornton's work. "I make films that have a reason for me."

Nana is funny and wry and moving and mocks, every so gently, through the filter of its young star's gaze. In short, this short packs a punch in no time flat.

The Melbourne Airport award is the latest in a plethora of positive hits in Thornton's career.

He's been selected at Sundance, London and Sydney. To reference just a few accolades.

Thornton first came to a national attention as Director of Photography in remarkable Australian film *Radiance*. Directed by Rachel Perkins, this was an affecting story beautifully shot.

One of Thornton's strengths as an emerging director is his adept gaze. He has the technical knowhow to make everything look arresting or beautiful. He balances this precision in *Nana* with straightforward warmth. It's a rare combination.

He told Melbourne Airport, "I have to laugh, cry and get angry about the idea before I even make the film. I'm not a filmmaker who would make a film about a subject I know nothing

about. For me I know I have to soak myself in it in order to make a film."

Currently on location in Alice Springs, this Kaytej nation man was hard to pin down for a chat.

"He's not fond of mobile telephones," his producer tells me when I ask to speak to the bloke who made *Nana*.

As much as I'd like a chat, I'm not that chagrined. This guy has a lot of movies to make. In time, we'll laugh, cry and get angry about all of them.

The **Melbourne Airport Emerging Australian Filmmaker Award** is just one of the awards in the **Melbourne Airport Emerging Talent Program**, which helps to launch the careers of some of Australia's most exciting new artists. Visit www.melbourneairport.com.au/emergingtalent/ to find out more.



WARWICK THORNTON ACCEPTING HIS MELBOURNE AIRPORT AWARD FROM DAVID FOXLEY, MELBOURNE AIRPORT'S GENERAL MANAGER OF DEVELOPMENT & CONSTRUCTION.

All things considered, MIFF is a gift. The only difficulty comes in those queues that snake around a city block. Even these have charm sufficient to diminish the pain of uncomfortable shoes. A festival or two ago, a student from RMIT gave me a free half hour lecture on the work of Francois Truffaut.

As much as ticket holders cherish such access to international vision, it's the local heroes that make the greatest imprint on the city.

2007 saw Warwick Thornton claim the