

FROM THE VAULT

A History of Women in Film and Television in New Zealand

Researched and written by Helen Martin

1973 Women in Film (WIF) is founded in Los Angeles, motivated by the editor-in-chief and publisher of *The Hollywood Reporter*, Tichi Wilkerson Kassel.

1992 WIF has nine chapters in the USA and chapters in Canada, the UK, Britain and Australia.

1993 WIFT Wellington is established, on the model of other international WIFT chapters.

1994 Wellington WIFT Chair Robin Laing encourages Barbara Cairns to set up an Auckland chapter, pointing out in a faxed letter dated June 24, 1994, that "it is important to reinforce WIFT as a professional organisation of women currently working in the industry."

WIFT Auckland is launched at the Carlton Hotel

Over 400 women attend the launch. Pioneer actor and filmmaker Ramai Hayward (*Rewi's Last Stand*) is presented with a life membership in recognition of her contribution to New Zealand film. Labour leader Helen Clark is to be an Honorary Friend.

Answering negative feedback from some men in the industry (reported in *Onfilm* as being 'MIFT'), Chairperson Karyn Hay points out that if women can do their jobs better, the industry as a whole benefits.

WIFT Auckland's membership is described in *TV Guide* as reading like 'a who's who of movers and shakers' (18.11.94).

1995 A screening of Auckland women's short films is held at the Civic to celebrate International Women's Day. The films screened are *Rud's Wife* (Alison Maclean), *Mon Desir* (Nicky Marshall), *Kitchen Sink* (Alison Maclean), *Invisible Hand* (Athina Tsoulis), *One Man's Meat* (Christine Parker), *Old Bastards* (Niki Caro).

1st international guest, Broadcast and Communications consultant Kealy Wilkinson (TWIFT), gives a seminar on the role TWIFT plays in the Canadian broadcasting scene.

Sneak preview of Gaylene Preston's *War Stories: Our Mothers Never Told Us*.

WIFT AUCKLAND joins chapters from France and Wellington in hosting a cocktail function at the Cannes Film Festival.

1st anniversary party held at Ponsonby Cruising Club

1996 Under the supervision of the WIFT lobby committee and funded by the New Zealand Film Commission, Alison Colvine begins work on a WIFT survey, *Behind the Scenes*, aimed at researching the participation and roles of women in the NZ film and television industry.

The WIFT Executive votes to support a SPADA initiative to lobby for the retention of Television One in public ownership and initiates a letter-writing campaign targeting key Ministers and all female MP's in support of the Film Commission lobby for more funds from government.

Donne nell' Audiovisio - Women in Film, Italy is founded

1st Policy Summit is held to discuss: production and training funding for women; Codes of Practice; Workplace Legislation; Local Content; Portrayal of Women on Screen

WIFT sponsors Best Supporting Actress at the TV Guide Film and Television Awards.

1997 The year sees WIFT AUCKLAND working more closely with WIFT Wellington.

The WIFT survey *Behind the Scenes* is launched. It is celebrated as a profile of women working in the film and television industries that will replace hearsay with quantitative evidence and that will give substance to concerns and issues raised by WIFT and others about the position of women.

WIFT International Summit held in New York with more than 85 delegates from 25 chapters. WIFTI's objectives are to:

- enhance the international visibility of all women in film and television
- facilitate and encourage communication and co-operation among Women in Film and Television chapters
- develop bold international projects and initiatives benefiting women in film and television and related industries throughout the world
- stimulate professional development and opportunities in the pursuit of professional equity for women in screen-based media worldwide
- promote and support chapter development
- celebrate the achievements of women in film, television and related industries
- encourage diverse and positive representation of women in screen-based media worldwide

1998 WIFT New York celebrate their 20th birthday, WIFT LA celebrate their 35th Birthday.

The first pan-industry lobby group, now called Local Content Lobby, establishes the need for a local content quota on television to counter the current situation where there is 19% local content on TV (inclusive of repeats).

A conference entitled ENDANGERED SPECIES? Local Programming and the Media is held at Auckland University. The focus is on local content and culture and includes guest speakers from Ireland and Australia. WIFT's speaker is Wellington member, Ginette McDonald.

A meeting of over 50 people representing a range of organisations is held to further discuss the Campaign for Local Content (CLC) and it is celebrated that for the first time film, television, music, radio and theatre groups are acting together.

Russian director Lidia Bobrova attends the International Film Festival in Auckland as a guest of WIFT accompanying her film *In That Country*.

The Local Content Lobby group launches its campaign nation-wide, asking for a 30% local content quota on television (currently in the 20's) and 10% level of New Zealand music on radio (currently 8%). The group is to be administered by the Green Ribbon Trust.

WIFT (Vic) Australia turns 10.

Fiona Milburn represents WIFT AUCKLAND at a WIFT International (WIFTI) summit in Los Angeles. In a newsletter report on the summit Fiona comments "Our comprehensive programme of workshops, seminars and special events compares favourably with the larger chapters and our involvement with wider issues such as the Green Ribbon Campaign for local content is almost unique."

1999 The world celebrates the centenary of cinema.

WIFT hosts Deepa Mehta while her film *Earth* screens at the Auckland International Film Festival

Mini-Summit for WIFTI (International) members in Montreal to plan EURO 2000, the WIFTI Summit. WIFTI now has 40 chapters worldwide and over 10,000 members

WIFT Lunch held at the SPADA Conference, Wellington – Rhys Kelly talks on Marketing Women's Stories on the International Stage.

A Labour/Greens coalition is confirmed as the new government, with Prime Minister Helen Clark committed to holding the arts and culture portfolio. Labour is committed to continued public ownership of Radio New Zealand and TVNZ.

2000 WIFT Local Content Quota Forum. Attended by the Hon. Marian Hobbs, Minister of Broadcasting and the Hon. Judith Tizard, Associate Minister of Arts, Culture and Heritage.

Government injection of \$80 million into Arts, Culture and Heritage

Establishment of Film Production fund

WIFT NZ is working in conjunction with the New Zealand Film Archive, Nga Kaitiaki O Nga Taonga Whithiahua, to submit to New York WIFT's Preservation Fund an early work by a NZ female filmmaker for preservation assistance. Restoration is sought for the 15 films of the Bathie Stewart Collection.

Women's Film Symposium organised by Deborah Shepard to launch her film history *Reframing Women*.

TVNZ Draft Charter released. WIFT makes a submission.

WIFT International Summit held in London. The WIFTI New Zealand session is panelled by Robin Laing and John O'Shea and moderated by Liz Stevens.

3rd International Indigenous Women's Film Conference, Te Whakawhitiahua o te Ira Wahine held in Auckland.

1st Welcome to the Firm: a workshop for students completing their Media Studies degrees

2001 Mairi Gunn is a WIFT representative at the 2nd Annual Women in Film Independent Vision Awards at the Sundance Film Festival.

The lobbying committee meets with Broadcasting Minister Marian Hobbs for a discussion on such topics as Charter implementation, restructuring of TVNZ, funding issues, local content quotas, children's and educational broadcasting.

Gaylene Preston becomes New Zealand's first filmmaker Laureate.

WIFT NZ presents a proposal to the WIFTI Board to hold the 2004 International Summit in Auckland and wins the bid.

The newsletter prints a comprehensive survey by Ali Bell on Working Mothers in the Industry.

On behalf of New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark invites WIFTI to hold its 2004 International Summit in Auckland.

2002 WIFT Auckland is represented at and/or made submissions to the NZFC's Strategic Planning Day; The NZFC's Review of the Industry Support Programme; The Ministry of Culture and Heritage's

Local Content Meeting; Judith Tizard's Arts Forum; Industry NZ's Workshop; The Commerce Committee's TVNZ Bill; DOC's Aoraki Draft Management Plan; Shaun Brown; the MCH's Signature Television Questionnaire; the Screen Industry Task Force Report.

Indiewire has reported that 25% of the films at Sundance this year were directed by women.

The Screen Production Industry Taskforce is announced. WIFT AUCKLAND's Di Rowan and WIFT Wellington's Robin Laing are named as members.

WIFT hosts Gail Dolgin and Vicente Franco while their film *Daughter From Danang* screens at the Auckland International Film Festival.

WIFTI's inaugural on-line Master Class in Screenwriting run by writer Linda Aronson

2003 WIFT includes the women of Nga Aho Whakaari as affiliate members.

WIFT makes policy submissions on: the proposed change to AFTA's Constitution; IRD's One Stop Shop; the Screen Production Industry Taskforce Report.

The Green Ribbon Trust ends.

The NZ Coalition for Cultural Diversity is formed. WIFT is represented by Mary Jane O'Reilly, Susan Nemeč and Eileen Lavranos. The Coalition aims to establish workable local content systems that allow for the representation of New Zealand culture through NZ's media organisations.

2004 WIFTI has over 40 chapters worldwide and over 10,000 members.

The Maori Television Service is launched.

5th Biennial WIFTI International Summit held at the Carlton Hotel, Auckland. Over 350 national and international delegates and guests take part.

The inaugural WIFT Awards are presented at the Summit's Women as Leaders Lunch.

The WIFT AUCKLAND Executive and Board hold a Hui to discuss the reasons for WIFT's existence, its principles and how to best structure the organisation's management to meet our changing needs.

Fiona Milburn stands takes up the position of WIFT International Chair.

After a vote by the membership WIFT AUCKLAND's two-tiered management system is dismantled and is replaced by a Governance Board and an Honorary Board.

2005 We celebrate 10 years of WIFT Auckland with a Women-as-Leaders Workshop, anniversary magazine and an evening celebration with Awards and film premiere.