

Article from Sunday Life
interview Erika Woods

Rewind

GEORGE MILLER

1987

He may have been accustomed to the bloodshed and mayhem of his Mad Max movies but the director wasn't ready for the disturbing experiences awaiting him on the set of The Witches of Eastwick



When I walked onto the set of *The Witches Of Eastwick*, I walked into a worst-case scenario of bad Hollywood behaviour. I even quit the film a couple of times. The only person who held me in there was Jack Nicholson [pictured with, from left, Michelle Pfeiffer, Susan Sarandon and Cher]. He's an amazing actor and a great sage. He'd seen it all and he sat and coached me through the process, which was all very erratic and bizarre. It became a very sexy project and everybody wanted to lay claim to it. But there's probably no one else I've learnt more from about filmmaking than Jack. So at least I got that out of the experience.

I got on extremely well with Susan Sarandon. She's a great actor and everything is effortless in her approach. She's also very intelligent and I worked with her later in *Lorenzo's Oil*. Michelle Pfeiffer is one of the most gifted actors I've worked with. I think she often chooses things a little too safe; she could do just about anything.

But Cher... It was one of the first times Cher had worked with experienced actors and I guess she felt, to some extent, out of her depth. She didn't know how to handle the dysfunctional situation, so she resorted to being a bit of a diva. She really played up. It made everything even more difficult. In subsequent years, we've met up again. We've given each other a big hug and we bonded with a mutual hatred of everything else that went on with the producers and the studio.

They sent me the script after I did some work with them on *Twilight Zone: The Movie*. That went well and I let my guard down. The script was very good but the set was the opposite. I think of that as the moment I lost my curiosity about film.

They'd asked me over [to the US] after the success of the *Mad Max* movies. I started off as a doctor but I'd always been interested in film and made a couple of short films. I just kept making them. I always thought I'd go back to being a doctor but my twin brother, John, went through medical school with me and continues to practise, and I realise how much I don't know now.

So I stayed in film and television and we [Miller's production company, Kennedy Miller] did *The Dismissal*, *Bodyline*, *Vietnam* and *The Year My Voice Broke*. After *Witches*, I went back to Australia for *Dead Calm* and *Bangkok Hilton*. After a while, I found my curiosity again. I have been back to Hollywood since but these days you can work anywhere. And the experience never put me off actors. Working with them excites me the most about filmmaking. They are amazing, like great athletes.

Fast forward

I'm now 63 and still enjoying what I'm doing. The first short film I made, in 1971, *Violence In The Cinema*, is to be screened as part of the Ozploitation [Australian films that broke taboos on the portrayal of sex and violence] section in the Melbourne International Film Festival [from July 25 to August 10]. I'm also featured in the opening-night film, *Not Quite Hollywood*, commenting on the influence of Ozploitation on my life. I don't remember what I said but I was trying to say there's a big difference between how we celebrate practices like violence and aggression, and how we really behave.

Doujon Zammit's heart will stay close to home

THE relatives of the man whose life was saved by Doujon Zammit's donated heart have been amazed to discover they live near the grieving Zammit family.

As the Australian heart patient recovered from transplant surgery in a Greek hospital, his grateful relatives have quietly attended Doujon's Sydney memorial service and thanked his mother, Rosemarie.

In a remarkable coincidence, the two families both live in Sydney and had an emotional meeting at Doujon's memorial service on Sunday night in Cecil Hills.

Remembering Doujon: Audio from the memorial service

"(The recipient's family) were grateful the heart has come from someone who was loved as much as Doujon was," a Zammit family relative who witnessed the meeting said.

Gallery: Doujon's life, and the memorial service

"They were very emotional, the (recipient's) grandmother was crying, she was as emotional as Rosemarie was."

Mykonos takes Doujon into their hearts

The family, including his grandmother, sister, brother-in-law and two other women, said they desperately wanted to thank the Zammit

family and to pay their respects.

The man is yet to be named with the Onasseio Cardiac Hospital in Athens hospital refusing to release his identity until he recovers from transplant surgery.

"How beautiful it is that they came," said the Zammit relative who asked for his name to be withheld. "I know as time passes the family is going to want to know them as extended family, like they will probably want to know us as extended family."

"(Oliver Zammit) met the guy and his wife, he said they were absolutely beautiful people, that's why he made the decision with Rosemarie

to donate his (son's) heart."

Mr Zammit, Doujon's father, met the transplant recipient and his wife in Athens.

Doujon Zammit, 20, died on Friday after his life support was switched off, five days after bouncers bashed him on the Greek Island of Mykonos.

"I've had the pleasure of meeting the person taking his heart and his wife, and his heart could not have gone to a better family," Mr Zammit told mourners via mobile phone on Sunday.

The recipient is an Australian with Greek heritage and it is believed he lives in Athens with his wife.