

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



“Ah’ll be back”: the future of cinema

Tasmanian cinema buffs are being invited to attend a public lecture at UTAS’ Inveresk campus this week by Deakin University’s Chair of Media and Communications, Professor Deb Verhoeven.

Prof. Verhoeven is a visiting scholar at the UTAS School of Visual and Performing Arts, and is helping lay the foundations for an innovative new program that may eventually result in a new screen studies course being offered in Launceston.

On Wednesday, Prof. Verhoeven will present a public lecture titled *The Cinema in Transition*, which will explore the often predicted death of cinema, along with its future.

“I’m going to be looking at the idea that we live in the post-movie age, the idea that going to the cinema is some kind of nostalgic practice,” Prof. Verhoeven said.

“I want to address that by looking at some of the statistics that have been gathered recently, particularly by Screen Australia, which suggest that cinema-going is not dead.

“This is the perfect time to start thinking about the future of cinema as we face the proliferation of options for how we consume cinema – on your iPad, on your smart phone, on your computer, television, Xbox or PSP.

“What is it specifically about the cinema that is so durable, and what is changing?”

Prof. Verhoeven has drawn parallels between the newspaper industry and the cinema industry, saying both had challenges and opportunities ahead.

“For example, iPads may in fact save the newspaper industry, not kill it, and it is interesting that many people don’t understand that,” she said.

“People often think that because there is a new technology it is somehow competing against and cannibalising the old one.

“That doesn’t necessarily have to be the case. If magazines and newspapers can adapt to these new technologies then maybe they can survive.

“And cinema has also proven itself to be durable over the years. It has survived major technological changes, from silent to sound, the introduction of television, the introduction of video, the introduction of DVD and so on.

“The death of cinema has been predicted over and over, ever since the 1940s and 50s.

“Every time there is a major change, everyone leaps to the worst possible conclusion.”

Part of Prof. Verhoeven’s lecture will focus on a new UTAS research program known as the Cinema in Transition Experiment, or CITE.

According to SVPA head Marie Sierra, CITE would allow visual and performing arts students to work with students from the School of Architecture and Design to examine in depth the future of cinema.

Prof Verhoeven said she hoped the project would ultimately result in a “cinema of the future”, which could be built in Launceston.

“The cinema venue has not changed since the invention of the multiplex in the 1980s and 90s,” she said.

“They still look pretty much like they used to, but maybe there is an opportunity to radically rethink what a cinema can look like.

“Look at how we design new cars.

“The big companies sit down and mock up concept cars, some of which get built and some of which don’t.

“Those concept cars push the industry forward, and that is how we get new brake systems, improved controls, better fuel mileage and so on.

“I think we need something similar in the film industry for cinemas, where we get the creative people like architecture and design experts, and specialists in theatre and performance to sit down and start to work out what possibilities exist for the future of cinema.

“Ultimately I would like to see something built.

“It would be a really interesting initiative for the industry to have access to an experimental site where they could test some of their ideas.

“The National Broadband Network makes this very possible, and all sorts of possibilities exist for using a place like Launceston to develop other opportunities.”

Media opportunity:

What: Prof Deb Verhoeven's lecture *The Cinema in Transition*, will be held at the Rory Spence Lecture Theatre at the School of Architecture and Design at Inveresk, and the public is invited to attend.

When: Wednesday, May 11, from 6.30pm.

For more information or to arrange interviews please call Luke Scott at the UTAS media office on 0488 021 960.

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