

# Kenny's the king

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FROM arthouse to the outhouse, two very different films that shared similarly complicated births were celebrated at the AFI Awards in Melbourne last night.

At the front door, attention was focused on Aussiewood stars Cate Blanchett, Heath Ledger and Eric Bana — along with *Harry Potter's* boy wizard Daniel Radcliffe — but inside, a film almost entirely in an indigenous language took the gongs.

*Ten Canoes* swept all before it, taking out best film, best director and best original screenplay, on top of an award for "pursuit of excellence" to director Rolf de Heer.

Crowd favourite *Kenny*, the mockumentary about a toilet plumber, took out the best actor award for its title character, played by Shane Jacobson.

Despite being the highest-grossing local film of the year, taking more than \$6.5 million, Jacobson shrugged off suggestions *Kenny* should have been named best film. "I don't think art should be celebrated by box office," he said. "It's like having children. The industry has given birth to some great children this year."

The film is a family affair for Jacobson. His nephew Jesse played Kenny's son, his brother Clayton directed — and starred as his brother — and their father Ronald was their dad on-screen.

Jacobson, who pipped international stars Heath Ledger (*Candy*) and Gabriel Byrne (*Jindabyne*), paid tribute to the workers of Splashdown, the portable toilet company that inspired and funded the film. He said that 12 months ago he was helping them clean the toilets at the 2005 AFI awards.

While *Kenny* made its debut at Poowong in South Gippsland, *Ten Canoes* had its world premiere at the Adelaide Film Festival, which provided financial assistance to South Australian-based de Heer to make the movie, which has grossed \$3.35 million. It was a project that arose from a conversation between de Heer and actor David Gulpilil.

Gulpilil wanted the director to make a film with his community at Ramaling, in Arnhem Land. He came up with the idea after

seeing a photograph, taken in the 1930s, by anthropologist Donald Thomson, which showed 10 men and their canoes during a traditional goose-egg hunt.

It was originally intended that Gulpilil would act in the film, and co-direct it, but he withdrew shortly before shooting began. But his voice can be heard in a voice-over. His son, Jamie, plays a central character, Dayindi.

Accepting the award for best screenplay, Rolf de Heer paid tribute to Gulpilil, who is battling drug addiction and alcoholism in Darwin. "Thank you for pestering me for years to make a film with your land and your people," he said.

De Heer shared the best director award with Peter Djigirr. Speaking in Ganalbingu while de Heer translated, Djigirr said: "This whitefella came to our land and we sat down and talked about making a film. We're very proud of that film."

On the red carpet, Ledger passionately kissed Sharon Strzelecki, the comic creation of Magda Szubanski from *Kath & Kim*. Sharon fainted while Ledger later said he bruised his lip.

Sharon later presented a Readers Choice Award to Ledger. She appeared on stage with lipstick smeared over her face and a lovebite on her chest, declaring she had a case of "Heath rash".

Anthony Hayes (*Suburban Mayhem*) pipped Geoffrey Rush (*Candy*) for best supporting actor. He said it was "fantastic" to beat Rush who ribbed him at Wednesday night's craft awards. "Stick this one, Geoff!" he said.

■ The Clint Eastwood film *Letters from Iwo Jima* was named this year's best film by the US' National Board of Review on Wednesday in the first major award of the Oscar season. Helen Mirren won best actress for her portrayal of Queen Elizabeth in *The Queen*, while Forest Whitaker won best actor for his role in *The Last King of Scotland*. The awards can be an indicator of what to expect for the Academy Awards in February.

With **DAN HARRISON**, REUTERS

## METRO

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## LINK

► [www.afi.org.au](http://www.afi.org.au)

