Martin Brown

Class of 1976

Martin was not a great student at LCGS, but he did ok. He wasn't sporty but he really liked hanging out in the Art room and he really loved the Outdoor Ed program: those expeditions into the wilderness with Richard Schmidt did more to form his spiritual nature than all the time in chapel. Three activities the school organised had a huge impact on Martin's future. In Year 7, Mr Walter let Martin's group make a Super-8 film as a project. It was a chase film involving stolen lunch money. In Year 10 the school encouraged students to take part in a weekend filmmaking workshop run by AFTRS. Martin's group was given a camera and allowed to roam the streets interviewing people. In Year 12, Rylton Viney took the HSC Art students to Melbourne to see an unforgettable exhibition of modern art.

When he left school, Martin wanted to be an environmental scientist but had failed maths (twice! too much time in the Art room…) so he wasn't able to enrol in a science degree. On enrolment day at UTAS he swapped to Arts, graduating with a BA Dip Ed. As part of studying English Lit he fell in with the drama crowd and was a spear carrier in several summer holiday Shakespeare productions in the sunken garden. Being a practical type, Martin also made props and sets and this led him to Polygon, an amateur theatre company that eventually became professional. Meanwhile he taught high school for three years and finished a Masters degree.

Now in love with life in the Arts, Martin left Tasmania for the big smoke and landed a job as production manager at Belvoir St Theatre in Sydney. He worked with legendary figures like Jim Sharman, Neil Armfield and Brian Thomson, and a designer straight out of NIDA called Catherine Martin. Catherine was going out with a chap called Baz Luhrmann who had developed Strictly Ballroom as a student play at NIDA. By the time Strictly had been turned into a feature film, Martin had left theatre, worked on a string of music videos and commercials and landed a job as an art director on a feature film. When Catherine needed an art director for Strictly she called Martin.

Strictly Ballroom was a huge hit, getting a 10-minute standing ovation at the Cannes Film Festival. Martin kept working with Catherine and Baz on a string of projects, including as co-producer on Romeo+Juliet, which was shot in Mexico, and as lead producer of Moulin Rouge, which was the first Australian film invited to open Cannes. It was nominated for eight Academy Awards, including Best Picture, and won a Golden Globe for Best Musical or Comedy. Martin was awarded the Darryl F. Zanuck Award for Producer of the Year in 2001 by the Producers' Guild of America for his work on Moulin Rouge. Variety magazine also nominated him as one of the Top Ten Producers to Watch in 2002.

Martin had his own company for several years, making feature films, television and documentaries, including A Sister's Love with Ivan Sen. Around this time, he served on the Advisory Board of Screen Tasmania and consulted for the Australian Film Commission, the NSW Film and Television Office and the Australian Writers Guild.

Martin was approached to join AFTRS, Australia's national film school. In 2014 he was appointed Director of Award Courses with responsibility for all accredited courses. He also established the Applied Industry Research unit which, in partnership with the industry, developed innovative projects in Virtual Reality, Binaural Audio and Biometric Feedback.

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Martin is currently working with the University of Sydney as Program Manager Innovative Technologies, where he leads a team that develops training programs in virtual reality for frontline health workers and explores ways to improve educational practice. His production company is developing several feature films and television projects.

Martin's mum and brother are still in Tassie and his daughter, Isabella and son, Henry live in Sydney.