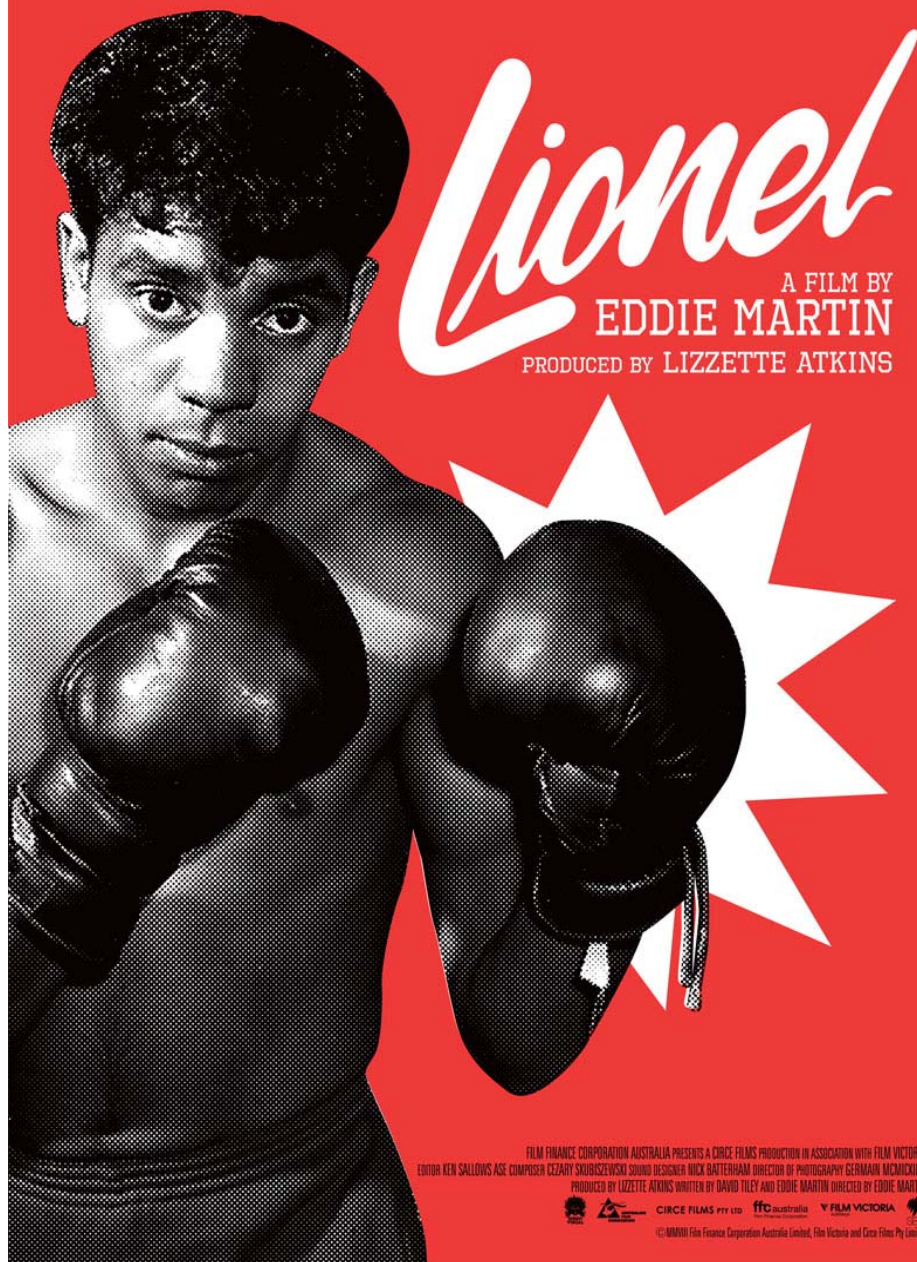


A DOCUMENTARY FILM



FILM FINANCE CORPORATION AUSTRALIA PRESENTS A CIRCE FILMS PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH FILM VICTORIA  
EDITOR KEN SALLONS ASE COMPOSER CZARY SKUBISZEWSKI SOUND DESIGNER NICK BATTERHAM DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY GERHARD MICKELING  
PRODUCED BY LIZZETTE ATKINS WRITTEN BY DAVID TULEY AND EDDIE MARTIN DIRECTED BY EDDIE MARTIN

 CIRCE FILMS PTY LTD   

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## PRESS KIT

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83 minutes • Colour and B&W • HDCAM • 16:9 FHA • Stereo



## QUOTE BANK

(4 ½ stars)

"This is a brave and touching film. . . among the best Australian films of the year"

Evan Williams , The Australian

(4 stars)

"Lionel is one of the best sports documentaries ever made in this country."

Leigh Paatsch, Herald Sun

"...a stunningly intimate documentary that stands as a fine testament to a truly great Australian. "

Erin Free, FilmINK

"A fascinating and moving portrait of the man behind the myth."

Vicky Roach, The Daily Telegraph

"Director Eddie Martin proves how the best tributes to great men are ones that acknowledge their failings, not hide them."

Jim Schembri, The Age

## BRIEF SYNOPSIS

In 1968 a young aboriginal boxer with a charming smile punched his way to history when he stopped Fighting Harada in Japan over fifteen rounds. His name was Lionel Rose and he became the undisputed world bantamweight champion. Two hundred and fifty thousand people hit the streets of Melbourne to welcome him back and he went on to become a symbolic figure in the interracial politics of the times. Combining a remarkable selection of archival and present day observational footage and interviews, the film explores how Lionel became a mythic sporting figure and his struggle with the dimensions of that myth in his every day life.

## FULL SYNOPSIS

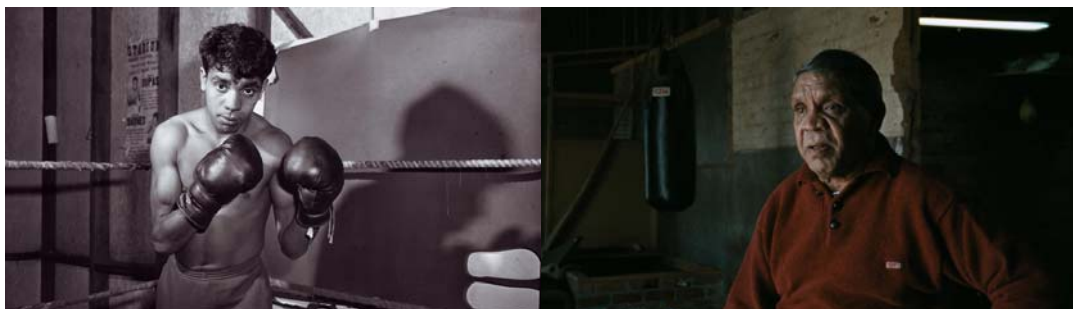
In 1968 a young aboriginal boxer with a charming smile punched his way to history when he stopped Fighting Harada in Japan over fifteen rounds.

He was the undisputed bantamweight champion of the world. He was the first black sporting hero. He was Australia's first boxer with a world crown. He was Lionel Rose and two hundred and fifty thousand people hit the streets of Melbourne to welcome him back.



Lionel Rose became a symbolic figure in the interracial politics of the times. He won his world title just a few months after the referendum, which gave the Australian Government new powers to advance Aboriginal rights.

Over the next few years he married his childhood sweetheart in a blaze of publicity, defended his crown, spent his money on his family, gambling, drugs and low life companionship. Four years later Lionel Rose lost his title, his marriage broke up, and he tangled with the law, did time, and briefly became a country music star. Today he lives with his family in Gippsland and is a legend in the boxing world.



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Combining a selection of remarkable archival and present day footage, the story of Lionel Rose is driven by interviews and the use of voice over from Lionel. Archive includes the young Lionel training, his world title fights, his homecoming to a hero's welcome, and news coverage of his life story, his marriage and his subsequent fall from fame. A series of stills portrays his childhood on the famous Jackson's Track, one of the few aboriginal communities to elude government intervention during that era.



The film explores how Lionel became a mythic sporting figure and his struggle with the dimensions of that myth in his life. It captures the image of 'Lionel the man' and 'Lionel the hero', how he reconciles his past with the present. We interrogate the notion of him as a heroic individual belting someone man-to-man against his relationship to, and love of family and friends - the reluctant hero and role model to many of his family, friends and the aboriginal community who have all stuck by him, even through the hard times.

LIONEL is a film that will challenge our preconceptions as it weaves an intricate and unflinchingly honest portrayal of a complex human being. Lionel's imperfections may be larger than life - but so is his heart.





## EDDIE MARTIN – DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT

In my teens and early twenties I was greatly inspired by stories about the aboriginal boxing champion Lionel Rose recalled by friends living in and around Drouin and Warrigal, Lionel’s own country. For me, his story took on mythological proportions and whilst I would see his photos on the walls of working class drinking holes, I didn’t feel I really knew the man behind the myth. I could sense the importance of this buried idol and his place as a great Australian and felt compelled to follow his story through.

I had imagined that a documentary on Lionel would already exist and thought that, at the very least, I would do a contemporary version of his story. After some initial research, I was amazed to discover such a documentary did not in fact exist. This empowered me to move to the next stage. The fact that his life had been so well documented over the years by the media and the existence of a wealth of archival footage gave the project a great impetus.

One of the first decisions I made was to shoot on Super 16. It would ensure the film retained its cinematic qualities and complement the black and white archival material, nearly all shot on film. The aim was to seamlessly marry the extraordinarily rich archival sources with the contemporary footage in the form of observational film. The cost of shooting on film forced me to be in control of every frame. Our screen ratio was 15:1. Currently documentaries mostly shot on digital cameras have a ratio of anything between 50 & 100: 1. In order to achieve this, meticulous advance planning was required. I literally had to almost make the film in my head, before embarking on shooting.

The shooting of LIONEL, like all observational films, was driven by process. In the process of developing and shooting, two things were fundamental to our approach; learning to avoid clichés and developing the trust of our main characters, to the point we had earned their trust and they felt comfortable with conveying their truth.

The issue of trust was absolutely central to the production of this film. I talked with Lionel and visited him on a number of occasions before we agreed to move forward and commence filming.

This is not an academic film, although it deals in complex subtext. It follows and describes lived experience, cutting from the present to the past. We deploy conventional material - interviews, observational footage, photographs, news footage and newspaper clippings to help tell the story.

The film uses time, space and music in a particular way. The film has time to breathe. It seems leisurely, because Lionel's life is pretty relaxed. Lionel has moved through life at his own pace and we are not afraid to create a sense of a certain feeling of lassitude.

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In the archival footage, the expressions on Lionel's face often say more than words can create.

The key themes in the film are about memory, identity and respect. We were interested in exploring how Lionel became a mythic sporting figure and his struggle with the dimensions of that myth in his every day life. Being famous has its own set of rules to live by - its own language, culture, rules, and aspirations. To translate this slightly mysterious world for the viewer has required a great deal of thought and research in terms of my approach to filming as well as how I tell the story.

Whilst making the film, Lionel suffered a stroke leaving him immobile and without speech. Understanding the importance of Lionel Rose in Australian history we wanted his story to be told while he was still alive, so we were determined to push on. Two weeks after his stroke we were back filming. Due to Lionel's fighting spirit he improved a great deal, however his speech has never fully recovered. We managed to work around this tragedy as we already had many audio recordings and filming sessions completed before his stroke. The strength and depth of archival footage and interviews gave us enough material to justify pushing on.





## ABOUT THE FILM MAKERS

### Producer – Lizzette Atkins

Towards the end of 2002, Lizzette Atkins and Beth Frey formed their production Company CIRCE FILMS PTY LTD. Based in Melbourne, Australia, Circe Films is engaged in the development and production of feature films, television dramas and documentaries.

In 2004/2005 their documentaries 'Passport to Parenthood', 'Undercover Angels: Sex, Spies and Surveillance' and the AFI award winning 'Vietnam Nurses' screened on national television. Their multi award winning one-hour TV drama 'Stranded' went to air early 2006. It also screened at the London and Shanghai Film Festival and won 3 AFI Awards, (Best Short Drama, Best Screenplay and Best Actor), the IF Award for Best Short Drama and a Television Logie for Best New Talent.

The documentary series "Do Not Resuscitate" directed by Davor Dirlic premiered on national television in 2006 and was selected to screen at the prestigious NZ Docs Oct 2007. Recently completed is the feature film "Night" directed by Lawrence Johnston. "Night" was selected to screen in Visions at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2007 and was nominated by the Joris Ivens Award at IDFA in late 2007. It was released theatrically in early 2008. The documentary series "Wedding Sari Showdown" went to air January 2008 and the feature documentary "Rock 'n Roll Nerd" will premiere at the Melbourne International Film Festival in 2008.

CIRCE FILMS has a slate of feature films and several documentaries in development and financing including the feature projects, *The Shelter* with writer/ director Samuel Macgeorge, *Kid Snowball* with writer John Brumpton and director Matthew Saville. (Noise). *Jericho* has been recently selected for SPARK workshop 2008 and *The Serpent* directed by Ben Hackworth has been chosen as part of the L'Atelier Program in Cannes 2008.

### Director – Eddie Martin

Since completing studies in film, EDDIE MARTIN has been working on the development of several personal projects, both documentary and narrative. The first of these projects was a one-hour documentary 'Jisoe' which was made with the support of Ghost pictures in Melbourne. Completed in 2004 'Jisoe' was selected to screen at several festivals around the world to great critical acclaim.

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*'In my opinion it's one of the best, most significant documentaries to be produced in Australia of recent years..'*

Megan Spencer, Film Critic SBS, Triple J

Eddie has just finished production on his latest film a feature documentary 'Lionel' about boxing champion Lionel Rose. On this project he has teamed up with producer Lizzette Atkins (Night) the highly experienced editor Ken Sallows (Chopper, Malcolm) and leading Australian film composer Cezary Skubiszewski (Death Defying Acts, Two Hands).

*'It's rare on the Australian landscape to see documentaries with such a cinematic and tactile quality – It really is an excellent and important work'*

Richard Sowada, Head of Programming - ACMI

He is currently working on his first narrative feature project planned to commence shooting next year.



## **Writer – David Tiley**

David is a writer who works in film. From 1973 to 1996 he was an educational film writer and researcher, occasional documentary director, and intermittent teacher. Since then David has also been a film bureaucrat, Internet content manager, feature and documentary script editor, narration writer, and documentary writer. Since June 2005, he has edited Screen Hub, the email newsletter for the screen industries, and currently runs an active weblog at [barista.media2.org](http://barista.media2.org).

## **Editor – Ken Sallows**

With a resume replete with innumerable screen highlights and awards from Australia's film industry, Ken Sallows commenced as a script assistant with Crawford Productions; the first step in a career that has seen him emerge as one of the industry's finest editors. Over the past two decades, Ken Sallows had edited TOM WHITE, GETTING' SQUARE, CRACKERJACK, YOLNGU BOY, CHOPPER, MALCOLM, RIKKY AND PETE, CELIA, RETURN HOME, ISABELLE EBERHARDT, PROOF, THAT EYE THE SKY, LOVE AND OTHER CATASTROPHES, TRUE LOVE AND CHAOS, DOING TIME FOR PATSY CLINE, CRACKERS, STRANGE FITS OF PASSION, THE MISSING and STRANGE PLANET. His credits also include a broad range of documentaries, television series' and shorts.



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## Composer - Cezary Skubiszewski

Cezary's first film score was for the film 'Lilian's Story', directed by fellow Pole Jerzy Domaradzki. He has since worked with many Australian directors, including Gregor Jordan (Two Hands), Steve Jacobs (La Spagnola), Richard Flanagan (The Sound of One Hand Clapping), Sam Neill (The Brush Off), Dein Perry (Bootmen) writer - producer Andrew Knight ( the acclaimed Network 10/Granada mini-series 'After the Deluge') and Ana Kokkinos (The Book of Revelation). He recently finished working on Gillian's Armstrong 'Death Defying Acts' starring Catherine Zeta Jones and Guy Pearce.

Cezary has composed music for numerous television films and programmes and also wrote music for many advertising campaigns including Sydney 2000 Olympics, AFL Finals, Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games and most recently conducted the MSO and 160 person choir for Carlton Draught 'Big Ad' campaign that became a sensation all over the world.

In 2003 Cezary received a Centenary Medal for service to Australian Society and Australian Film Production.



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## DOCUMENTARY PARTICIPANT LIST

Lionel Rose  
Jenny Rose  
Jack Rennie  
Mark Rennie  
John Johnson  
Gary Foley

## KEY CREATIVES & CREW LIST

<b>Director</b>	Eddie Martin
<b>Producer</b>	Lizzette Atkins
<b>Writers</b>	David Tiley Eddie Martin
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Germain McMicking
<b>Editor</b>	Ken Sallows
<b>Composer</b>	Cezary Skubiszewski
<b>Sound Design</b>	Nick Batterham
<b>Treatment Writer</b>	David Tiley
<b>Production Manager</b>	Rebecca Matthews
<b>Production Manager</b>	Lenny de Vries
<b>Post Production Manager</b>	Donna Molan

## TECHNICAL DETAILS

Format:	HDCAM & Digital Betacam
Screen Ratio:	16 : 9 FHA
Country of Production:	Australia
Running Time:	83 minutes
Sound:	Stereo