

From the chapter 'Snapshots – Sydney and Melbourne'

Destiny Deacon

There seemed a kind of blak mystery-man thing about Michael. And since he's been gone, I'm none the wiser about him, other than what I already think I know.

I hope Michael enjoyed working with me. Looking back, I remember he laughed a lot while we were filming and I hope I'm a bit wiser for doing something with him. We never consulted or talked much about the projects we made. He would give me some notice from Sydney and, before I knew it, he and his camera would be in Melbourne, rolling in my kitchen.

We both come from the same old school of blak family, politics and community service. Our chuckles and mumbles come from a not-so-distant place and time that most people prefer to forget or regret. Goodness knows what he had in mind, by wanting to work with me.

Rather than acting as a director in his work with me, it was more a matter of him setting a situation in which I could perform. Michael trusted my rough-draft scenario outlines, which meant all those involved had to improvise and adlib their way about. Michael was strict and no-nonsense. He chose the scenes he wanted, getting the attitudes he wanted. Plus he had the editorial control. I would have changed and edited heaps.

Anyway, I don't consider myself an actor, maybe a storyteller. Michael put a tight schedule on us to come up with the stories we made. Once, I got him to give me a break and got him to try some 'acting'.

In *I don't wanna be a bludger* (1999), Michael chose to play an 'uncle' character. He named himself 'Harold' and did his own styling and wardrobe with help from Virginia Fraser, who also helped with lights, props and filmed his birthday-party segment. It is a strange and interesting performance. Michael had regrets that he may have overacted. And I had qualms about playing the fool ... but he made me do it.

It's funny, but I can't remember where I first met Michael, nearly two decades ago. It seems I've always known him enough to trust him. Enough to know where he was coming from. A puzzle with some pieces.