

DRAMA SCHOOL

Is a star born...or made?

DRAMA SCHOOL follows a year in the life Australia's most famous acting school - the National Institute for Dramatic Art in Sydney - where what happens off stage is often more dramatic than what happens on it.

"I mean I loved NIDA and hated it," says Mel Gibson, NIDA's most famous graduate. "At times it was very frustrating and hard and depressing and all this kind of stuff but, if you were prepared to stick with it, the rewards were really good."

DRAMA SCHOOL charts the journey of a select group of acting students as they embark on ambitious careers in a difficult and insecure profession. While NIDA has produced such international stars as Mel Gibson, Judy Davis and Cate Blanchett, there are also many actors who have found the going too tough. It's not for the faint-hearted.

Thousands of hopefuls from around the country compete for 26 acting places available at NIDA each year. We witness a small group of aspiring actors make it through the tough audition process, then endure the confronting first year at "boot camp NIDA". By the end of the gruelling course often less than 18 will have survived.

DRAMA SCHOOL simultaneously follows a group of third year students as they prepare to graduate and begin an exciting but unpredictable future treading the professional boards and film sets for the first time, negotiating with agents and auditioning for parts.

The hothouse atmosphere of a drama school is a potent setting for this intense and dramatic series. Lacking money, time and often family, new students share households and personal crises while they endure the demands of becoming a professional actor. Despite these challenges they display an extraordinary passion and commitment to succeed. Their personas are turned inside out performing in classics, musicals, comedies and films, developing skills they once thought unattainable.

In the mercurial industry of stage and screen the success or failure of an actor often appears random. Made by some of Australia's foremost film-makers **DRAMA SCHOOL** provides an entertaining and moving insight into what it takes to become an actor.