



FOREWORD

ALLANAH ZITSERMAN

FILM FESTIVAL DIRECTOR

She may not look like Australia's answer to Robert Redford, but Allana Zitserman plans to eclipse Sundance - the Hollywood star's international film festival - with an event in the tiny town of Dungog.

Where? It's in NSW's Hunter Valley wine district, says Zitserman, who is the CEO of the town's film festival. "You'd be surprised how many people know it."

The film writer/producer, 31, moved to Dungog in 2005 with her filmmaker partner Stavros Kazantzidis (the festival MD) after a stint living in London's Notting Hill - "literally above the bookshop in the film".

"I came here wanting space, and a place to write," she says of the tree change. "Then I realised this place had the oldest purpose-built cinema in Australia ... and the XPT [train] coming straight from Sydney. I started thinking it was perfect for the film festival I thought we needed."

Zitserman, who grew up in Bondi, was just 22 when she and Kazantzidis won an AFI award (best original screenplay) for *Russian Doll*, her debut movie, so she is well aware of how isolated and competitive film-makers can become.

Dungog has no awards. "It is a celebration, a showcase," she says, adding that last year's inaugural event created a "film frenzy" with 70 films screened to 1500 visitors.

This year, Zitserman is expecting 5000 visitors to descend on Dungog for the four-day event from May 29.

"It's amazing how many people really love Australian films and want to meet Australian filmmakers. If you are a part of the Australian film industry you're a winner, because you get to make movies for a living."

*Report Helen O'Neill
 Photography Andy Baker*

