

# ASHLEY IRWIN *Biography*

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Emmy® award-winner ASHLEY IRWIN is one of Hollywood's most versatile composers, music directors and arrangers.

He won his first Emmy ("Outstanding Achievement in Music Direction") for his work on the 1992 ACADEMY AWARDS presentation and again as part of the team in 1998, 2003, 2007 and 2008. In fact, Ashley has been providing arrangements for the Oscars since 1990 and his work has been nominated for Emmy's on almost every occasion.

In 1998 he won the most coveted award for film music in his native Australia when his score to the restored 1926 German classic "THE WHITE HELL OF PIZ PALÜ" collected top honors from the Australian Guild of Screen Composers. Among his other awards are gold and platinum record albums, a slew of advertising awards and the 1989 IMMEDIA Award for "Composer/Producer/Arranger of the Year" in Australia.

When Sydney-born Ashley moved to Los Angeles in 1990 he came with a considerable body of work covering nearly all aspects of the music industry; film, television, advertising, theatre. He has since expanded even further, adding game music to his arsenal with the G.A.N.G. award-winning score for "THE GODFATHER" videogame for Electronic Arts.

Born into a musical family – his mother had been a singer with the Trocadero big band and his father a drum major in the Australian Army Band during World War II - he was brought up in a household rich with the sounds of Louis Armstrong, Glenn Miller, Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole and Frank Sinatra. It was no surprise that Ashley was introduced to music early with piano lessons at age three. He had been learning singing and tap-dancing from the age of 18 months (yes, it seems hard to believe) and he made his first appearance at two years old on a TV show called "SMALL TIME" which was hosted by Chris Bearde, who eventually left Australia and went on to create shows like "LAUGH IN" and "THE GONG SHOW" in the U.S.

Ashley continued singing and dancing lessons until he was six at which time his interest in playing music began to take over. He had started taking drum lessons at the age of five and continued playing drums until he was 16 years old. He was still studying classical piano but felt the need to learn more contemporary and pop styles. He studied with prominent Australian jazz pianist Harry Lynn, for a little over two years until Harry refused to continue teaching him for fear of having Ashley merely emulate his teacher's style rather than developing an individuality of his own. While shattered at the time, in hindsight Ashley admits it was one of the most honest and gracious things any of his mentors have ever done for him.

While attending Trinity College in Sydney Ashley had begun to play the cornet in the Army cadet brass band, and had developed an interest in arranging music so he entered the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music to study arranging and composition. His teachers were jazz guitarist George Golla and trombonist/arranger William Motzing. As fate would have it, some 20 years later, Bill Motzing was living and teaching in Germany when Ashley went to Berlin in 1994 to record his score to "THE EXPERT" and he invited Bill to conduct the Babelsberg Film Orchestra in order to share the experience of working with one of his teachers.

Upon his graduation from Trinity, Ashley was offered a position as one of three keyboard players in the Australian production of "JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR" and toured Australia for over a year. When "SUPERSTAR" closed he took the position of Musical Director for the Australian version of the Broadway show "LET MY PEOPLE COME". At 18 years old Ashley was the youngest M.D. in Australian theatrical history. He continued working in theatre for a few more years and it was during his tenure as Associate Music Director/Conductor for the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust's production of "NED KELLY" that he met his future wife Beverley who was playing the role of Kate, Ned's sister.

Ashley's talents as an arranger and musical director were soon being called upon by the recording industry and after arranging and producing an album for prominent Australian artist, Col Joye he was appointed the in-house producer and A&R manager of Colin & Kevin Jacobsen's independent label, ATA RECORDS. He left ATA in 1980 and produced the hit record "KISS ARMY / NORMDRUM" for comedian Norman Gunston and musically directed his national stage tour.

Between 1981 and 1984 Ashley firmly established himself as an arranger at the forefront of the Australian recording industry working the entire gamut of films, records, commercials and documentaries interspersed with the occasional live performance. It was at this time that he also began to devote more attention to composition.

In 1984, Ashley was commissioned as the Music Recording Supervisor for the film "THE COOLANGATTA GOLD" ("THE GOLD AND THE GLORY" in the US), during which he met Academy Award-winning composer Bill Conti who had been chosen to compose the score. Bill was so impressed by Ashley's work he asked him to mix the soundtrack album and produce the single from the movie "HEARTBEAT". This association blossomed into both a close friendship and a strong musical relationship, and eventually led Ashley and his family to relocate to America. After his work with Conti, international markets started to open up for Ashley, working with the likes of Maurice Jarre and Peter Matz. Bill Conti's recommendations enabled him to produce tracks in the U.S. for such acts as The Spinners, Ashford & Simpson and Roberta Flack.

In 1986, aside from traveling exhaustively producing various acts for an assortment of record and publishing companies, Ashley was commissioned by FAIRLIGHT INSTRUMENTS to create and record their acclaimed library of orchestral instrument samples for their SERIES III Computer Musical Instrument. At this time he was also a consultant to the ROLAND CORPORATION of Japan, a position he held for 7 years.

Over the next few years, Ashley became the "go-to guy" for music on Australian TV. Many of his shows have been released throughout the world (including "E STREET", "RICHMOND HILL", "ALL THE WAY", "WILLING & ABEL" and "CHANCES").

With the downturn in the Australian film and TV industry in 1989, due in part to the financial over-commitment of entrepreneurs, the time seemed right for Ashley to relocate himself, his family and his recording studio to the States and continue his career. After receiving a Visa of Distinguished Merit from the U.S. government, he took up residence in Los Angeles in 1990.

Since his arrival in Hollywood, Ashley has scored over 20 feature films in his own right and lent his talents to many more as orchestrator, arranger and/or music producer. He has also provided his services extensively as composer, musical director and/or arranger in television, as well as for arena events and theme parks around the globe.

Over the years, Ashley's arrangements have been performed on numerous occasions for Presidents Clinton, Bush and Obama while his moving choral orchestration of "Mansions of the Lord" was performed during President Ronald Reagan's state funeral service.

As his original orchestral scores to famous silent film restorations continue to be performed extensively in film-live concerts throughout the world, Ashley has found himself spending more time on the conductor's podium. Among his more memorable concerts of the last few years have been the Australian premiere of "DISNEY IN CONCERT: Magical Music from the Movies" with the West Australian Philharmonic, "ZADE-ONE NIGHT IN JORDAN: A Concert for Peace" with the Royal Philharmonic and the London Voices, and the world premiere of "THE GODFATHER: Live" at Sydney's historic State Theatre.

In 2009 Ashley was elected to the board of The Society of Composers & Lyricists (SCL), the premier organization for professional music and lyric creators working in film, television, video game and theatre. Within weeks he became chair of the Seminar Committee where, with the able help of fellow committee members, revitalized the seminar and workshop program, resulting in a noticeable increase in membership and member participation that continues to this day.

2010 saw Ashley's first collaboration with film legend Clint Eastwood when he orchestrated and conducted Clint's score for "HEREAFTER" which, after premiering at the 2010 Toronto Film Festival, closed the prestigious New York Film Festival before opening wide in U.S theatres on October 22. Coincidentally, "TANGIER" (Sony), the long-awaited final album by Australian rock pioneer and icon Billy Thorpe, for which Ashley arranged and conducted members of The Australian Chamber Orchestra on several tracks, had its Australian release on the same day. He also arranged and conducted the members of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in the music soundtrack for the 2010 WINTER OLYMPICS (Foxtel) which won a Promax BDA World Silver Award for Sydney-based production house, Fresh Music.

2011 began with Ashley providing arrangements and orchestrations for Paul Mazursky's new stage musical comedy "MOON OVER PARADOR". Based on the 1988 movie, it has a book by Mazursky and Leon Capetanos, original music by Bill Conti, lyrics by Gerard Alesandrini and choreography by Walter Painter.

2011 also saw Ashley appointed an official APRA AMBASSADOR by the Australian Performing Right Association.

Ashley's first original stage musical "PYJAMAS IN PARADISE" had its World Premiere at the Arts Centre Gold Coast on September 8, 2011. Co-written with John-Michael Howson and Peter Pinne, it opened to rave reviews not in small part due to the masterful direction and choreography of Tony Bartuccio.

November 2011 saw Ashley's second collaboration with Clint Eastwood hit the big screen with the premiere of "J. EDGAR" opening the AFI Film Festival in Los Angeles. Once again Ashley conducted his orchestral and choral orchestrations of Clint's evocative original score.

During 2012 Ashley scored several independent films, wrote many arrangements for TV and records while stepping up his involvement with the SCL culminating, in 2013, with his election as president of the prestigious organization marking the first time in its more than 70-year history, that the SCL had elected a non-US born composer to the position.

In 2013 Ashley was also invited to be Music Director for the Australian Screen Music Awards, a position to which he will return for a fourth consecutive engagement in 2016.

Early 2014 saw Ashley's third collaboration with Clint Eastwood, this time on the film version of the hit stage musical "JERSEY BOYS" for which he again arranged and conducted Clint's score. Premiering at the AFI Film Festival in Los Angeles, it was featured as the closing night gala event.

2015 saw Ashley return to Australia to work on an Australian TV production for the first time in since his relocation to Los Angeles, when the lure of the mini-series "PETER ALLEN: NOT THE BOY NEXT DOOR" proved too great a project to resist. Drawing upon the breadth of his talents and experience, Ashley's meticulous recreations of the original recordings of songs by the likes of Judy Garland, Liza Minelli, Olivia Newton-John and, of course, Peter Allen was acknowledged with a nomination for Best Sound in Television at the 5th AACTA awards.

Already in 2016, Ashley has enjoyed two film-live performances by the Nuremberg Symphony of his score to "THE WHITE HELL OF PIZ PALÙ", arranged and produced music for the 88<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards and looks forward to several other exciting projects.

Ashley currently lives in Los Angeles with his wife of 37 years, Beverley. They have one son, Corey, who produces the morning show KEVIN KLEIN LIVE for CBS Radio LIVE 105-FM in San Francisco. They also have a large, excitable dog, Rudy.

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