

Pearce gets one tick closer to being household name

By Mike Szymanski
Knight Ridder Newspapers

HOLLYWOOD (Zap2it.com, KRT) — Guy Pearce is blonde and jet-lagged when he sits down to an interview in the new Hollywood complex where the Academy Awards are going to be handed out in a few weeks. The 34-year-old Australian actor isn't too concerned that critics think that he was robbed of an Oscar nomination for his role as a tattooed amnesiac in the cult indie hit "Memento" this past year.

"Do I think the early release of "Memento" hurt the film? Well, I think it's ironic that people should forget about that film," he smiles and sighs. "I'm the last person to talk about that, I haven't seen any of the films."

Then, he concedes, "I'm a big Sean Penn fan (nominated for "I am Sam"), but then I don't know what it means to win one."

He's looking like his blonde character in "Memento" (a film nominated for Best Original Screenplay and Best Editing), because he just finished playing the roguish Chance Wayne in Tennessee Williams' "Sweet Bird of Youth,"

in an Australian theater, and it was "important for me to be suntanned and blond, beach-boy, gigolo-looking," he smiles. "I haven't had the chance to dye it out yet."

If he had his preference, he'd wear his hair longer, like he has it in "The Count of Monte Cristo," "The Time Machine" and his next film with "Six Feet Under's" Rachel Griffith, "The Hard Word."

"I must admit, I always prefer to have long hair, but I never usually get a chance to do it because it's always getting cut off for a job."

He got to wear lots of fabulous wigs in "The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert," which first got him high praise in 1994 for playing a bitchy, gaudy drag queen, and "The Count" was a wig, but he's more noted for his short hair — like the slicked-back look he had as a straight-laced cop in "L.A. Confidential." In that one, he co-starred with now-Oscar-winner Russell Crowe.

Pearce has obviously taken the more eclectic film route, doing things like the odd cannibal period-film "Ravenous" in 1999 while Crowe has gone on to do "Gladiator" and "A Beautiful Mind." But

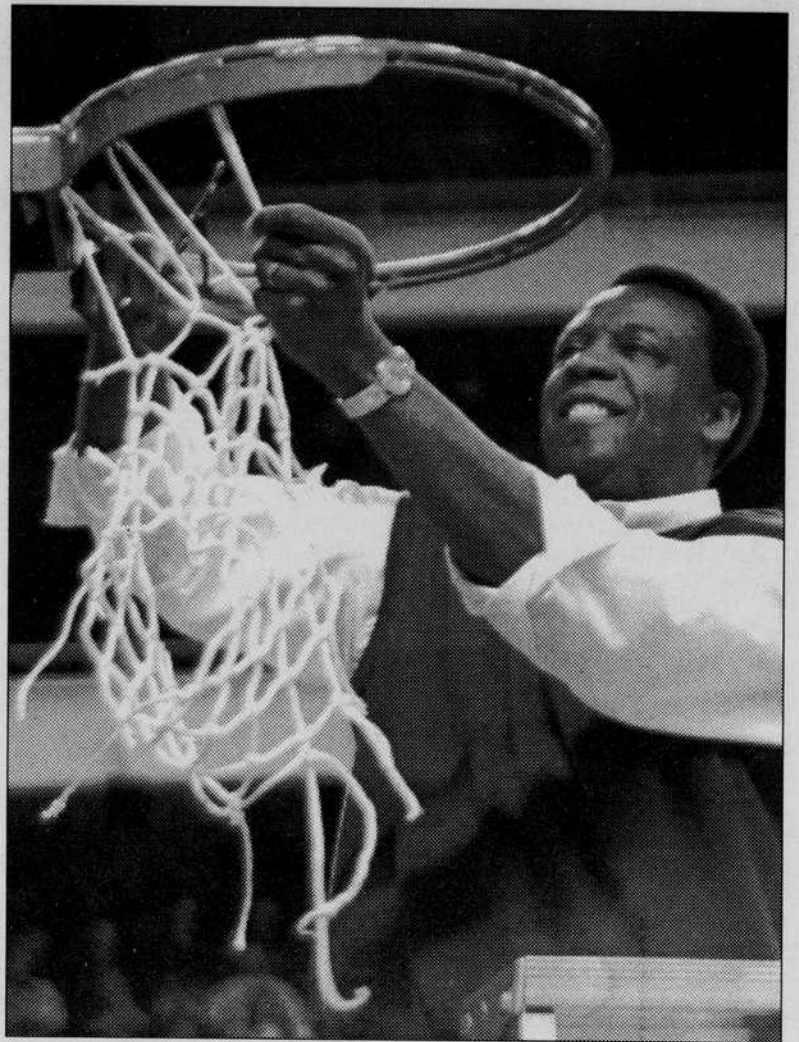
now, Pearce is becoming a household name, and he's taking on one of the most beloved characters in sci-fi history, the Time Traveler in H.G. Wells' "The Time Machine."

The film co-stars Dublin singer Samantha Mumba, Orlando Jones, Jeremy Irons and Mark Addy and is directed by the novelist's great-grandson Simon Wells (who previously directed the animated "Prince of Egypt"). Wells tells Zap2it.com that Pearce is one of the few young actors today who can pull off the role because he's "one of the few actors working today who can look bookish and intelligent like a scientist."

Pearce admits he is a bit bookish in real life, and prefers to curl up with his cats and wife, Kate Mestitz, and read a book quietly at their home in Melbourne rather than face an Oscar party in Hollywood.

Pearce likes spending time with smaller independent films where executives aren't worried about test screenings or audience reactions, and there's "a purity of creativity and inspiration."

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Thomas Patterson Emerald

Oregon head coach Ernie Kent cuts down the net at McArthur Court on Sunday in celebration of the Ducks' first outright Pac-10 title since 1939.

Basketball

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perdine this season, 88-64, in Eugene in December.

But the Ducks said they won't look any further than Montana.

"You can't look past any team in this tournament," forward Luke Jackson said. "They all deserve to be there. We know a little bit about Montana, and we're looking forward to learning more about them this week."

Other teams in the Midwest bracket include top-seed Kansas, No. 3 Mississippi State, No. 4 Illinois, No. 5 Florida and No. 6 Texas. Oregon was the highest-seeded

Pac-10 team in the tournament. Arizona received a No. 3 seed in the South region, while No. 4 Southern California, No. 6 California and No. 8 UCLA also ended up in the South. Stanford received the No. 8 seed in the Midwest.

For now, Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said the Ducks will try to use the emotion from Sunday afternoon and channel it onto the floor Thursday, with Oregon entering the NCAA Tournament with more pressure than ever before.

"We are really ready," Kent said Sunday. "This team is anxious to play again."

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Conference

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treatment by Mexican police and urged them to continue fighting "environmental injustice" wherever they found it.

"Imagine we're a bunch of people all in the same house," he concluded. "We should take care of the land that God gave us. We should participate in making God's kingdom."

Between 3,000 and 5,000 people took part in the conference, according to conference co-director Jonathan Manton. Manton, a member of the student law society called Land Air and Water, which sponsored the event, said the conference went even better than expected.

"Things never go exactly as planned," he said. "But it was everything we hoped and much, much more."

The capacity crowd in the EMU Ballroom for 2000 Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader on Friday may have accounted for some of Manton's optimism. Nader's address was scheduled for noon, but a line of people waiting to get in had packed the EMU Foyer by 11 a.m.

Nader called for more "grass-roots" activism and made a point of telling activists to "start with family pocket books" in their efforts to gain support for environmental causes among mainstream Americans.

"Imagine we're a bunch of people all in the same house. We should take care of the land that God gave us. We should participate in making God's kingdom."

Rudolfo Montiel Flores
ecologist

Harkening back to his 2000 presidential campaign, Nader criticized the lack of environmentalist leadership in "post-Kyoto Washington" and warned that voting for politicians based on their opponent's platform did more harm than good.

"Once you get to the 'least worst' mode, both candidates will get worse every four years," he said.

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