

screen time

with
Alice Wasley



Runner-up: *State Of Play*, starring Rachel McAdams and Russell Crowe, came in second

Efron gets the edge on Crowe

RUSSELL Crowe has gone up against Zac Efron and come off second best – at the box office that is. Crowe plays an investigative journalist in his latest film, *State Of Play*, a political thriller based on the BBC TV series.

The film, which also stars Ben Affleck and Rachel McAdams, came in at No. 2 at the box office, grossing \$US14.07m (\$19.93 million) behind the *High School Musical* star's comedy *17 Again*, which earned \$US23.72m.

State Of Play opens in Australia on May 28.

Critics' Rogen roast

HE'S usually portrayed as a harmless, loveable loser in films such as *Knocked Up* and *Pineapple Express*, but Seth Rogen has caused a stir with his latest film.

In the dark comedy, *Observe And Report*, Rogen plays a bipolar shopping mall cop. One scene, where Rogen appears to date rape Anna Faris's character before she drowsily consents through a haze of drugs and alcohol, has divided reviewers. One described the film as "the equivalent of a finger down the throat".

In response to the backlash, Rogen said: "That sex scene is one of the funniest things I've ever experienced in a movie."

He told *Entertainment Weekly* that Warner Bros didn't ask them to edit or delete the scene.

"There were some arguments with the studio," he said. "That wasn't one of them. Shockingly."

Observe And Report opens here on May 14.

Tug of love debut



DIRECTOR Warwick Thornton (pictured) plans to resume work on the film he was writing before he was diverted by *Samson And Delilah*, a teenage love story set in an Aboriginal community just outside of Alice Springs. He says the

monastery-set period drama *Father And Son* "was the wrong film to make as my first picture".

"It was too big – the cast was too big," the Alice Springs-born filmmaker says. "It needs the whole rock'n'roll clown-show cinema crew."

Despite the attention Thornton has garnered for his first movie, which is tipped to be selected for this year's Cannes Film Festival, he says he is unlikely to be lured by Hollywood.

"I don't want to go to bloody Hollywood," he says. "I've got plenty to say without the need for their money or their control."

Vicky Roach is on leave



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Muscling up: Hugh Jackman returns as a leaner, meaner Wolverine in the prequel (above) and with wife Deborra-Lee Furness (below)

Man of many faces

Hugh Jackman continues to be full of surprises, writes **Alice Wasley**

HE MIGHT be a muscle-bound action man but Hugh Jackman admits he has quite a thin skin. Countless images of him grimacing, complete with his trademark sideburns and deadly claws, are floating around in the promotional material for his latest film *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, but in reality he's a softie who dreads the appraisal of others.

"I'm terrible like that – I have no idea, I don't read reviews, I don't go on the internet," Jackman says. "Because I'm a typical actor, it doesn't really matter if eight people liked it and two didn't, I'll only really listen to the two that didn't."

Wife Deborra-Lee Furness is the one person he is always prepared to hear the truth from, especially after an opening night or his recent gig hosting the Oscars.

"Afterwards I always invite my wife into my dressing room – I want no one but my wife," he says. "I want to hear it straight how it went. And we just always have a moment together."

No doubt Furness breathed a sigh of relief after her husband dazzled Hollywood with his tongue-in-cheek musical routine at the

Academy Awards. It was something he says he was "shocked" to be asked to do. Forty-year-old Jackman, who previously

was best known in America for his role as Wolverine in the *X-Men* films, says as a result he has gained more notoriety there.

"The paparazzi's gone a little more crazy since then," Jackman admits.

And apart from more attention, his talents as a song-and-dance man are now recognised worldwide.

"I think when the Oscars happened, a lot of people were like, 'What? I knew him as Wolverine. He sings? He dances?'" he says.

"That was kind of a shock to them."

The timing for the boost in his profile couldn't be better, with *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* about to be released here and in the US, especially after the setback earlier this month when an unfinished version of the film was leaked on the internet.

Jackman, who is both the star and producer of the movie, agrees a lot is riding on its success. The 20th Century Fox film had an estimated budget of at least \$US150 million (\$207 million) and was the first movie in the *X-Men* franchise to be filmed in Australia and New Zealand, something Jackman pushed for.

It is also only the second feature film for production company Seed, which he founded with Furness and business partner John Palermo. "I do have more invested in it – there's no doubt about it," he says.

Although things seem to be falling into place for Jackman, he says he has never "been a great strategist" and points out the Oscars could have easily gone the other way.

"If it had really died ... it would have been bad," he says.

To submit to the intense physical preparation Jackman goes through to become

Wolverine he would need to be driven by a lot more than simply commercial interests. He describes the gruelling diet and intense exercise regime he put himself through as "a Spartan lifestyle".

"I do get a little turned on by

– I don't know what it is – a real challenge," he says. "I'm one of those. If I wasn't under contract to do a movie I'd want to climb a mountain or do something because I quite like the extremes and having something to go for."

"Knowing you're on a 40-foot [12m] screen is good incentive."

He was also inspired by the prospect of a leaner, veinier, more menacing Wolverine.

"I have an image of the character in my head and in this movie this is the first time I've gone – that's it!" he says.

This was all part of a larger plan to make his film stand apart from the other *X-Men* films, based on the Marvel *X-Men* comics.

It is a prequel to the first three films and tells the story of how the mutant Wolverine developed. Jackman chose *Tsotsi* director Gavin Hood, a step away from previous *X-Men* directors Bryan Singer and Brett Ratner.

The cast includes Liev Schreiber and Ryan Reynolds, but there's no sign of Halle Berry or Anna Paquin, who starred with Jackman in the previous films.

Filming mostly at Australian locations, including Cockatoo Island and Fox Studios, as well as the Hawkesbury, Camden and a Newcastle beach that stands in for the Normandy coastline in the movie, also helped achieve a different look for the film.

"You've got a different quality – of light, of scenery – you've got a slightly different feel from what we've had before and you see that in the film," he says.

Jackman, who is based with his family in New York, is keen to get stuck into a new project but won't confirm exactly what it will be. But he hints that after playing tough characters in his last two films, including *The Drover* in Baz Luhrmann's *Australia*, we might see something different from him.

His production company has been working on two musicals – one for the stage and one for the screen.

"I'm really working heavily on a movie version of *Carousel*, a remake of that," he says. "For two years we've been trying to find a way to make it relevant and not feel old-fashioned and I think we've finally done that."

"On stage we're working on a musical version of the life of Houdini. We've been working on that for about a year and we'll probably go to Broadway when we're finished. But it'll be at least a year away."

Jackman as a singing, dancing Houdini sounds intriguing and he's clearly not frightened of taking a risk.

"Come on. Why not?" he says with a laugh. As the actor describes his fascination with the famous magician, a few parallels between the two become obvious.

"If he could sing and dance he would have done it," Jackman says. "He was a showman basically. He was probably the first rock star. A master manipulator of the media and a showman through and through."



X-Men Origins: Wolverine opens next Wednesday