



History in the making

Filmmaker Douglas Watkin captures a royal event in his father's life, writes **Nathanael Cooper**

WHEN 19-year-old Edward Watkin was plucked from obscurity to act as a driver in the Queen's first visit to Cairns in 1954, he would never have imagined that one day his son would create a film celebrating that momentous occasion.

When Queen Elizabeth's people found they were one driver short for the cavalcade, they found the nearest mechanic and when the big day arrived, Watkin was part of the parade.

His son Douglas has taken that story as inspiration for a short film that is being shown as part of the *Land, Sea and Sky* exhibition at the Gallery of Modern Art.

Douglas Watkin is more readily recognised as a documentary filmmaker, telling the stories of indigenous Australia.

But this latest film, *The Queen and I*, sees the young filmmaker turn his hand to a more dramatic time of movie making. Using the medium of a graphic novel, Watkin will tell his father's story in a way only he can.



AT THE HELM: It was a moment in time, when a mechanic joined the Queen's parade, a moment celebrated 60 years later by his son Douglas Watkin. **Picture: Liam Kidston**

"Technically we are documenting, but we are using the graphic novel illustration as a way to tell the story," he explains. "It is a comical series of events based on an historical event."

Initially, Watkin hoped to make the film as a live action drama but budgetary constraints and the realisation that such a period piece would cost about as much to make as Baz

Luhrmann's *Australia* led him to some lateral thinking.

"I was speaking to my conceptual designer about creating some drawings for *The Queen and I* so I could pitch it to a funding body," Watkin explains.

"Somewhere between a conceptual story . . . drawings and getting some funding we decided that we should just turn the story into a graphic novel."

Fantastic drawings with basic

animation created what the public will now see at GoMA.

"I think regardless of what medium it is, it is a pleasure and an honour to tell this story," Watkin said.

"People ask me if I would be happy if it was a big epic . . . but it is a real privilege just to tell the story."

The Queen and I will play at GoMA until *Land, Sea and Sky* finishes on October 9.