

Aussie pair blitz Hollywood

May 12, 2006 - 4:58PM

Australia's latest glamour exports to Hollywood mixed it with the two new kings of horror at a poolside awards party in Beverly Hills.

Jacinda Barrett, the Brisbane-born actress tipped to be the next Nicole Kidman, and Jesse Spencer, the latest graduate of the TV soap *Neighbours* to hit it big in Tinseltown, were honoured with Breakthrough Awards.

Melbourne filmmakers, Leigh Whannell and James Wan, the masterminds behind the psychologically disturbing *SAW* films, were also recipients.

The ceremony, held at Beverly Hills' swanky Avalon Hotel, was organised by Australians in Film, a non-profit LA-based organisation that boasts Kidman, Russell Crowe, Cate Blanchett and Hugh Jackman among its ambassadors and helps foster young Aussie talent in Tinseltown.



Look out Hollywood ... Barrett and Spencer have landed.

"People keep on asking me why there are so many Australians working out here, and I have no idea, although I did a little research on the Internet," Barrett, 34, who stars in the \$194 million re-make of the classic 1972 disaster film, *The Poseidon Adventure*, told the 150 guests at the \$322-a-seat function.

"We are resilient, there are more than 1,500 species of spiders and 6,000 species of flies and it's the driest continent on earth.

"We can take the heat.

"Our record temperature is 58 deg Celsius and that's 128 degrees Fahrenheit for all the Yanks here."

The four Breakthrough recipients received a gold boomerang from Australian jeweller Dinosaur Designs.

The awards night, that highlighted young Australians making waves in Hollywood, was held around the Avalon's famous pool.

The guests sipped Toohey's New beer - a rare commodity in the US - Zaraphath wine from Western Australia and Australian made Ice Star bottled cocktails.

Spencer, 27, is one of the stars of the hit US TV series, *House MD*, and was presented with his award by his American co-star and girlfriend, Jennifer Morrison.

"Just two years ago I was still catching the bus from my youth hostel down on Melrose Ave to do

auditions," Spencer told the guests.

"I ended up being two hours late every time.

"Any aspiring actor out there - hire a car."

Whannell and Wan, both 29, who were struggling filmmakers but now rank alongside the likes of horror greats George Romero and Wes Craven in Hollywood after *SAW* and *SAW 2* made a combined \$322 million at the worldwide box office the past two years, had a laugh about their boomerang awards.

When Whannell received his he looked down at the inscription to find the "h" missing from his surname.

"Leigh Wannell couldn't make it tonight," Whannell laughed.

"But, Leigh Whannell, that's me, could. That's fine guys,

"It's part of that Aussie spirit. You know just a little bit of a joke, let's drop the 'h' and see how he reacts."

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