

Stars line up to make movies of Winton's classics

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Move over John Grisham, J. K. Rowling and Dan Brown — our bestselling novelist Tim Winton is generating his own movie spin-off industry.

Having written his first play *Rising Water*, which had its world premiere at the State Theatre Centre last night, Winton is looking forward to seeing most of his celebrated books making their way to the big screen over the next few years.

Some of the country's hottest talent — Russell Crowe, Cate Blanchett, Simon Baker, Mia Wasikowska and David Wenham — are zeroing in on the four-time Miles Franklin winner's beloved tales of ordinary Australian life.

Most significantly, Winton is getting more interested in what is happening to his work after decades of leaving the task to others.

"When I was in my 20s and 30s, I didn't spend time on pie-in-the-sky film projects because I was too busy working on the novels and stories to keep the wolves from the door," Winton said.

"When I finished one book I was straight on to the next. I felt I couldn't be delayed with other considerations. I felt the other stuff was a luxury.

"I've always been interested in film. But I've never written film scripts with the same conviction because of the bollocks that goes with it."

With money no longer an issue, Winton is now taking on new challenges, working on a series of plays, adaptations and original scripts.

He did the recent adaptation of the television mini-series version of *Cloudstreet* and has written the script for his coming-of-age award-winner *Breath*, which *The*



Toe in water: Tim Winton at Fremantle Sailing Club. Some of his works are heading for the big screen.

Picture: Robert Frith

Mentalist star Baker hopes to shoot in Margaret River.

Also on the boil are *The Turning*, with multiple directors handling Winton's series of interlinked stories, *The Drowner* producer Stephen van Mil is planning a big-budget version of his whaling classic *Shallows* and Julian Jarrold, of *Pride and Prejudice* fame, is lining up to direct *The Riders*.

The potentially great Winton adaptation that got away is *Dirt Music*, which fell apart when Heath Ledger — widely regarded as a natural for the part of Luther Fox — moved on to play *The Joker* in *The Dark Knight*.

Crowe has declared his intention to play the emotionally scarred poacher and musician and is reportedly writing songs for the movie.

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TIM WINTON'S SCREEN DREAMS

The Riders

Sam Worthington set to play the father searching for the mother of his child. Potentially a great moody art movie.

Dirt Music

Phillip Noyce keen to direct with Russell Crowe set to play musician/poacher Luther Fox. Major rewrite needed to account for Crowe's age.

The Turning

Script development funds secured. Each episode to be directed by different talent, including Cate Blanchett, Rachel Ward and, intriguingly, Mia Wasikowska.

Breath

Rights owned by Australian Mentalist star Simon Baker who will star as the surfing guru Sando. Margaret River is a possible location.

Shallows

Option for Winton's whaling epic held by Perth-based *Drowner* producer Stephen Van Mil. He's in talks with the likes of Peter Weir to direct.

