



Sir Sam Neill KNZM OBE - Biography
Actor | Producer | Winemaker | Author

Sir Sam Neill is an internationally acclaimed actor, filmmaker and winemaker whose remarkable career has spanned more than five decades across film, television and theatre.

Renowned for his versatility, charisma, and commanding screen presence, Neill has become one of the most respected and beloved figures in global cinema.

Born in Omagh, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, Sam Neill moved with his family to New Zealand in 1954, where he was raised and educated in Christchurch. He attended Christ's College and later graduated from the University of Canterbury with a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature. During his early years, Neill worked with the New Zealand National Film Unit, producing and directing documentaries before transitioning to acting.

Neill began his film career with the New Zealand television feature *The City of No* (1971), followed by the short film *The Water Cycle* (1972) and the television drama *Hunt's Duffer* (1973). Demonstrating his versatility behind the camera, Neill wrote and directed *Telephone Etiquette* (1974) for the New Zealand National Film Unit and went on to appear in *Landfall* (1975).

Neill's breakthrough came with the critically acclaimed feature *Sleeping Dogs* (1977), a landmark production that became the first New Zealand film to gain significant international release and recognition. He gained further recognition with the Australian film *My Brilliant Career* (1979), opposite Judy Davis, solidifying his reputation as a leading actor of depth and intelligence.

Throughout the 1980s, Neill built a diverse and distinguished body of work, appearing in acclaimed productions such as *Omen III: The Final Conflict* (1981), *Possession* (1981), and the television miniseries *Reilly: Ace of Spies* (1983), which earned him a Golden Globe nomination.

In the 1990s, Neill achieved worldwide fame for his portrayal of Dr. Alan Grant in Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993), a role he would reprise in *Jurassic Park III* (2001) and *Jurassic World: Dominion* (2022). That same year, he starred in the Academy Award winning film *The Piano* (1993), directed by Jane Campion, further demonstrating his ability to inhabit complex, emotionally nuanced characters.

Over the years, Sam Neill has balanced major Hollywood blockbusters with independent and art-house films, earning acclaim for performances in works such as *The Hunt for Red October* (1990), *Event Horizon* (1997), *The Dish* (2000), *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (2016), and *Peaky Blinders* (2013–2014). His extensive television credits include *Merlin* (1998), *The Tudors* (2007–2010) and *Invasion* (2021).

Beyond acting, Neill is an accomplished producer and winemaker. He is the founder and proprietor of Two Paddocks, a boutique vineyard and winery located in Central Otago, celebrated for its award-winning Pinot Noir.

In recognition of his contributions to the arts and to New Zealand, Neill was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1991 and named a Distinguished Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2007. He accepted redesignation as a Knight Companion (KNZM) in 2022.

In 2023, Neill released his bestselling memoir, *Did I Ever Tell You This?*, offering candid reflections on his life, career, and personal journey.

Sir Sam Neill continues to act, write, and engage audiences around the world with his authenticity, humour, and enduring passion for storytelling. Whether on screen or among the vines at his beloved Two Paddocks vineyard, he remains a quintessential New Zealander and an enduring icon of international cinema.

Neill's influence extends far beyond the screen. A passionate advocate for New Zealand's creative industries and a proud supporter of local storytelling, he continues to inspire new generations of filmmakers and actors.

His career embodies the spirit of Aotearoa's screen culture creativity, authenticity, and global excellence.