

SPOOKED

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SYNOPSIS

A conspiracy thriller arising from the mysterious death of Kevin Jones, who thinks he's just buying second-hand computers, until he looks at the data left on the discs. Was Kev murdered, or did he simply get drunk and crash his car? Investigating journalist Mort Whitman will find out if it kills him.

ABOUT THE FILM

In his new movie, *SPOOKED*, Geoff Murphy takes an intriguing series of events from 1992 New Zealand as his starting point and, making a daring imaginative jump, spins it to where all good 21st century conspiracies lead – Osama Bin Laden and the CIA.

SPOOKED, a contemporary conspiracy thriller written and directed by Murphy, is produced by Don Reynolds, Merata Mita, Geoff Dixon and Murphy for Silverscreen Films/Ora Digital in association with the New Zealand Film Commission, Capital Pictures and New Zealand On Air. Executive producers are Eric Watson and Mark Hotchin from Capital Pictures. The film is based on material from the book *The Paradise Conspiracy* by Ian Wishart.

SPOOKED stars Cliff Curtis, returned home from his Hollywood success (*Training Day*, *Runaway Jury*, *Whale Rider*) and Christopher Hobbs, whose recent work in Australia includes *Bad Cop Bad Cop*, *McLeod's Daughters* and *Water Rats* and who is well known in New Zealand for his core cast role of Dr Frank Malone in *Shortland Street*, with John Leigh (*Spin Doctors*, *Shortland Street*) and Miriama Smith (*Mercy Peak*, *Power Rangers Dino Thunder*). And in a reunion with Murphy from *Goodbye Pork Pie* and *Utu* days, Kelly Johnson plays Spook.

Kevin Jones (Hobbs), a second-hand computer dealer, buys a batch of old computers formerly owned by a large merchant bank. Thrown into the deal are 90 outdated floppy discs.

Curious, Kev opens the discs and finds data that he knows shouldn't be in the wrong hands. Thinking he can make a fast buck, he tries to sell the discs back to the bank. This unleashes a whirlwind of intrigue, corruption and violent harassment that destroys his livelihood, his relationship and possibly his sanity. Early one morning he is found dead in a car crash on Auckland Harbour Bridge, ostensibly a drink/drive casualty. But was there more to it?

Mort Whitman, an investigative journalist played by Cliff Curtis, takes up the story, becoming obsessive about uncovering the truth about Kev's death. Did the forces – private security, police, SIS, or CIA? – that increasingly plagued Kev's life, kill him? Or did he simply drink too much and crash the car?

The story is told by Mort. Sometimes he's talking direct to camera, sometimes interviewing participants – such as Kev's best mate Jimmy Blick (John Leigh), and his girlfriend, Ruby (Miriam Smith) – and sometimes he's directly involved himself, as he fights his superiors to get the story broadcast. Murphy's unique storytelling style reflects the nature of Mort's investigation as it teases out the events, the possibilities, taking us there, but never fully revealing the mystery at its core.

This sounds like heavy stuff for an entertainment movie, but Murphy keeps it light, lacing the plot with trademark laconic humour and astute characterisations and language that are distinctly kiwi.

The events written about by Ian Wishart in his book "The Paradise Conspiracy", in which young Auckland computer dealer Paul White died in mysterious circumstances after opening some discs belonging to a merchant bank, provide the starting point for Murphy's fictional global conspiracy story.

Murphy says New Zealanders are in the international world, whether we like it or not.

"We can pretend the CIA's not interested in us if we like, but it's a pretence. We are part of the international community and that's how it is. That's the tapestry against which this film is set."

However, there's more to SPOOKED than its biting comment on the global political backdrop, and New Zealand's place in the corruption:

"You can intellectualise about conspiracy theories and the CIA and the nature of multi-national corporations and all that, but you don't have a movie unless you can laugh and cry and resonate with the characters. So that's the game that we're in: to try and create that amalgam of emotion and meaning. Emotion, of course, being completely meaningless, so it's a fascinating trick. It's the best game in town."

So, there's also a love story. Kev and the beautiful no-nonsense Ruby. He loves her, in his own way, but she struggles with his increasing paranoia and "the bullshit", as she describes his dreams of making it big one day. And it's a story of mateship. Kev's friendship with Jimmy Blick, a conspiracy theorist of the "they poisoned Norm Kirk" variety, captures the typical kiwi male mates dynamic.

Producer Don Reynolds explains the title SPOOKED has come from the world of post-Cold War spies, known as spooks.

"Post-Cold War, the secret agents no longer work for government agencies and so they've set up private security firms to work for various big corporations and wealthy individuals. Basically that's what the film is about – we are being watched all the time. It's also about a manipulation of power – the fact that an ordinary person can inadvertently find themselves in an extraordinary situation, much to their detriment.

"We describe SPOOKED as a conspiracy thriller because the bank conspires to destroy Kevin after he happened to come across their mistake, which is that they had failed to erase the discs. They did everything in their power to make it

impossible for him to live a normal life. And the thriller side of it is: 'What's going to happen? Who's going to win?'

"It's not a comedy but it has a lot of humour. Like *Goodbye Pork Pie*, *Utu* and *Quiet Earth*, which all have a strong humour mingled with other emotions, SPOOKED has humour alongside tragedy. We hope the audience will laugh at times, cry at times, and be shocked at times, but we hope that overall it will be a worthwhile experience for them. It's entertainment."

Murphy had been working on the project for about six years, and at one point had German funding, but pulled back from it when it became apparent that the script changes required by the investors would have compromised the story.

Murphy: "The changes and the casting they wanted showed a complete lack of understanding of how it would work. So I said 'I can make films in Hollywood where they have control of the casting and rewrite the script. That's not my idea of a New Zealand film'. A New Zealand film is where you make a film about us and it's totally, uncompromisingly about us. It's designed to make our people have a bloody good time, have a good laugh, have a good cry and maybe be frightened, anxious or whatever."

Reynolds ran into Murphy at the Toronto Film Festival in 2002. They hadn't seen each other for about 10 years, but were old friends and colleagues. Reynolds had been an investor in and associate producer of *Goodbye Pork Pie* and produced *Quiet Earth*, which Murphy directed.

"I was actually trying to find a director for a film called *Predicament* and so we started talking about that. After Geoff Dixon and I had formed Silverscreen Films, Geoff Murphy sent us the script for this project, which he particularly wanted to do as a New Zealand-financed film. Because I knew the way Geoff would do it and the type of humour that was there, almost buried in the dialogue, I loved it. So we then all joined forces."

Producer Merata Mita, who is also partners with Murphy in Ora Digital, which produced SPOOKED alongside Silverscreen Films, as well as his life partner, says, "When he read Ian Wishart's book, Geoff was really taken with the elements of conspiracy, mystery and suspense thriller that were in the real story and he wanted to make it into a film. From time to time over the years he and I would work on it, introducing new elements that took it a bit further away from the book and also updated the story."

Mita says it was also a difficult script to write because it was about a real person who had died, taking into account respect for that person and his family, "trying to stay as close as possible to the truth and not making it too sensational."

Murphy says all his films have a family relationship to each other, but SPOOKED is more closely related to his iconic *Goodbye Pork Pie* than it is to either *Utu* or *Quiet Earth*.

"That's partly because it's a bit mad. It's not what it presents itself to be. It will have a similar energy level to *Pork Pie*, but the essential thing is that SPOOKED has a heart.

"It's really hard to compare a New Zealand film to any other sort. The New Zealand audience is very unforgiving of New Zealand films. They demand truth, they hate contrivance and falseness and plot manipulation for its own sake. They accept it completely in foreign films, but when a New Zealand film comes up, they will not buy it. And I really like that because it forces us to make much better films."

Mita: "The movie is exciting and funny and stylistically very different from anything else Geoff has made in the past. It's very European in style. It's not very American. It can't be very American because it's too low budget and therefore everything's approached with a kind of ingenuity and originality. It's been made with initiative and enterprise and that brings out the best in people and that's always exciting to work with".

Murphy has also enjoyed his return to working with New Zealand actors: "There's something very comfortable about working with your own people. I enjoyed working with American actors and some of them are extremely accomplished, but I just get a kick out of working here."

Murphy on Cliff Curtis: "He's a really interesting actor. He's very thoughtful and very deep and has a fantastic screen presence. He's got the ability to express a hell of a lot of emotion and complexity apparently with very little mobility of his face. You'd swear he was doing nothing, but you read the whole story in his face. It's a real gift. And being Maori, he also has a whole cultural side, which means there's always an overlay and a depth that is different to what a Pakeha would bring."

Curtis likens Murphy's approach on this film to jazz: "No one else could make this movie but Geoff. I know I certainly wouldn't be making this movie if Geoff wasn't doing it. He's a totally confident story-teller and film maker and he can deconstruct it and start messing with it. He's just mixing it all up, like playing jazz. The idea of jazz is that you understand the structure and the discipline and from there you just experiment. You start playing and you see what happens if you break the rules. Geoff's got a great understanding of entertainment."

There was an unexpected twist in the casting stage of SPOOKED. Murphy and casting director Ian Mune, his old friend and fellow director who is also an award-winning actor, originally chose Curtis to play Kevin Jones. But Curtis, keen to work with Murphy, but not keen on being Kev the way he was originally written, put himself forward for the role of Mort Whitman, the journalist, instead.

"I was interested in playing the journalist because he's got the perspective. He's looking around thinking 'is this story worth telling?' He follows it through and discovers that it's interesting. Then he looks deeper and realises there's definitely something shady going on. Then Mort comes to the point where he's in it up to his neck and he's got to decide. And he says 'bugger it, I'm going to go the whole hog. I'm going to go as far as it takes to tell the story because it's about a guy who's

tried to live with some kind of integrity'. And I thought that was a really interesting character," says Curtis.

Murphy says Chris Hobbs was so unprepossessing and modest that he was almost overlooked in the casting process, but his performance in the lead role as Kevin Jones has vindicated his casting.

"He does a beautiful job because he's got a lot of vulnerability and he's very charming. He's got terrific presence, which comes alive on film in the most amazing way. He has this permanent look of innocence and surprise on his face and I think he sets himself up for bad things to happen to him really beautifully."

Hobbs was attracted to the character of Kevin and the extent of the emotional journey he goes through.

"Kevin's just an ordinary who gets put into extraordinary circumstances. He starts off happy-go-lucky and moves to being absolutely paranoid and that's a great arc to play. At first he doesn't believe these things are happening to him and then when he does start to believe it, no one believes him and so he's all on his own going through this whole hideous process. There's no one to turn to. He's a gregarious person who's suddenly put into a position of being a loner and doesn't cope with it.

"Normally in New Zealand we think if worst comes to worst you can always talk to your mates or call the cops or call an MP or something. But imagine if all those avenues suddenly didn't work for you, or all your cries for help get turned around on you. In this story Kevin starts to break down as a result of this pressure."

Working with Murphy was also a big attraction: "The challenge for me to play a character going through a complete emotional breakdown that no one else understands or believes in is immense, so having Geoff Murphy at the helm is fantastic. Working with someone whose sole desire is to make me look great is amazing because it lets me just dive into the character headfirst. I've really enjoyed it."

John Leigh plays Jimmy Blick, Kev's best mate, who works downstairs and witnesses Kevin's disintegration with great concern, and eventually makes a brave, but fatal, decision.

Murphy: "John is a comedian anyway, which gives him a very acute sense of timing, which is extremely useful in this part, although it's not exactly a comedy role. He's almost tragic in the sense that he is a failure in his own life, but he is so loyal and so earnest, even in his most crackpot beliefs, that you can't help liking him."

The casting of Leigh was perfect for Hobbs: "Johnny Leigh is one of my best mates in real life, so we were able to easily tune into their relationship. Jimmy is terrific. His wife has left and so he and Kev just drink a lot and console each other about life and everything."

Leigh: "Jimmy gets caught up in Kev's problems and he's not fully aware of how dangerous it is to know such secrets. He's a little autistic, I think. He's not quite with us, he's in a world of his own a lot of the time."

Murphy admits to being a bit nervous about casting Miriama Smith in the role of Ruby Elder, Kev's girlfriend, because she was almost too beautiful to be real.

"Beauty is often a bit of a mask, and I find American films peopled by these plastic people that I find very hard to believe in. I much prefer the ordinary run of European and British films where people look like real people. In American films they tend to look like cyphers and Miriama almost fits the American mould, she's so gorgeous-looking. But she's got a great kiwi accent, which completely saves her, in my opinion. She's mature as an actress and gives a very good performance as a well-grounded, sensible girl trying to cope with a guy that doesn't know who he is yet. She is actually very fond of Kev, but he's very hard work and she struggles, like many Kiwi girls of that age, to form a meaningful bond with someone who's so immature."

Smith describes Ruby as a strong-headed woman. "She doesn't really take no for an answer and doesn't take any crap from anybody. She's quite unfazed by things and has quite a hard edge to her. She's a rock chick.

"Ruby thinks Kevin is a great fun guy to be with. I think if she could really say how she felt about him, she'd quite like to settle down and have kids with him, but to say that would be making herself very vulnerable and Ruby is quite proud. So generally she keeps everything light because she likes to have a good time."

Even though Ruby loves Kevin, she can't relate to the crisis he's going through and she's not sure if it's really happening. She loses patience with him and cannot help him.

"At the end of the day, she's looking for those intimate times they have where she sees Kevin as quite vulnerable and everyone can relate to him. There are other times in the movie where it's quite hard to relate to him because he's just all over the place. She can't be bothered putting her time into someone like that and she gets quite frustrated because she knows what a nice solid person he can be without all this going on."

For Kelly Johnson, still well known for his lead role in *Goodbye Pork Pie*, the reunion with Murphy was straightforward. "It's years since I'd even seen Geoff and then he called and it was like a voice out of the darkness. He explained what the role involved and I said 'yeah, no trouble', because it's got a slightly comic aspect to it as well as the mysterious spy-type guy.

"Geoff's just the same, he's got the same sort of energy and the same obsessiveness about making a film and the ideas behind it. He's a really creative person and his excitement rubs off on everybody."

In addition to a series of very strong performances by several of New Zealand's leading actors – Greg Johnson, Peter Elliott, Kevin J Wilson, Geoff Dolan, Murray Keane, Alison Bruce, Paul Barrett and Mark Ferguson, Murphy has cast some of his

mates in key cameos. There's Vincent Ward, Ian Mune, Philip Gordon, Sean Duffy and Murphy himself. He has also taken a slightly lateral approach and used comedians Raybon Kan, Radar and Wade Jackson in straight acting roles.

And there's a stunning musical performance in the nightclub scenes from Murphy's friend from *Freejack* days, renowned saxophonist George Coleman, who was visiting from New York.

GEOFF MURPHY - Writer/director

For Geoff Murphy, who wrote and directed it, *SPOOKED* represents a return to his roots as an original, intensely New Zealand film maker. It is another landmark in a prolific career which stretches from the South Island West Coast location of his first feature, *Wildman* in 1976, to Los Angeles in the 1990s directing Hollywood movies such as the western *Young Guns II* for Fox and science fiction thriller *Freejack* for Warner Bros, both starring Emilio Estavez

The iconic New Zealand film *Goodbye Pork Pie* (1980), which Murphy wrote, directed and produced, is still Number 4 in the top 10 box office list of all New Zealand films, and was the first New Zealand film to have significant overseas sales success.

His next feature, *Utu*, was also a box office success, and now stands at Number 7 on the all-time list. *Utu* achieved international critical acclaim, most notably a lengthy "New Yorker" accolade from legendary film critic Pauline Kael.

Murphy directed the apocalyptic drama *Quiet Earth*, which was produced by Don Reynolds, one of the producers of *SPOOKED*. It starred Bruno Lawrence, a collaborator of Murphy's since they formed Blerta, the 1970s travelling rock band which incorporated drama and film and was the beginning of Murphy's film making. He recently produced, wrote and directed *Blerta Revisited*, a feature length documentary exploring the phenomenon.

Never Say Die (1988), an action thriller, starred Temuera Morrison early in his career and was Murphy's last feature in New Zealand. He was producer of two films directed by his partner Merata Mita: the landmark *Patu!* (1983), the documentary of the 1981 Springbok Tour protests, and *Mauri* (1988), a pioneering Maori feature film, which starred Anzac Wallace, who was also the lead in *Utu*.

His other US movies as director are: Warner Bros' *Under Siege 2: Dark Territory* (1995), starring Seven Seagal; *Fortress 2: Re-Entry* (1999), an action sci-fi movie for Columbia Tri-Star. He directed HBO features *The Last Outlaw*, a western starring Mickey Rourke; *Blind Side* (1993), a thriller starring Rutger Hauer and Rebecca De Mornay; thriller *Red King, White Knight*; action thriller *Don't Look Back*, starring Eric Stoltz and Billy Bob Thornton; TNT feature *Race Against Time*, starring Eric Roberts and Cary Elwes and a feature length TV pilot for CBS, *The Magnificent Seven* (1998).

He was second unit director and associate producer on *Dante's Peak*, the action/drama disaster movie directed by his old friend Roger Donaldson, for whom he had worked as special effects director on the breakthrough 1978 feature *Sleeping Dogs*. More recently, he was second unit director for all three of Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* movies.

DON REYNOLDS – Producer

Don Reynolds joined the New Zealand National Film Unit in 1969 as a sound trainee. He had the unique opportunity to learn all aspects of the craft of filmmaking. In 1974 he established Associated Sounds Ltd which became the largest independent post production facility in New Zealand and he produced 12 films including *The Quiet Earth*, *Sylvia*, *Illustrious Energy* and *The End of the Golden Weather*. These films won numerous awards in New Zealand and abroad and quickly established Don as a significant producer in the New Zealand industry.

In 1988 he was appointed Chief Executive of South Pacific Pictures, the newly created TVNZ drama subsidiary. Under Don, South Pacific Pictures produced in excess of 200 hours of drama, both in New Zealand and throughout the world. Don was responsible for creating and setting up the first locally produced daily soap, *SHORTLAND STREET*, which is now in its 11th year of production. He moved from there to TVNZ as Director of Production and Co-production where he was responsible for all locally produced productions.

Don moved to London with Grundy Worldwide as their Senior Vice President of Drama before taking up a role with Atlantis Films Ltd (now Alliance Atlantis) as their London based of President of International Co-production.

Don was enticed back to Australia to take up the newly created role of Head of Program Production for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation based in Sydney. He headed up the Program Production Portfolio and was responsible for all ABC production in Television, Radio and Multi Media. He sat on the ABC Executive, reporting to the Managing Director.

In order to get back closer to production Don created Film.Com Pty Ltd, an independent production company based in Sydney, to produce films and television drama in both New Zealand and Australia. In 2002 Don partnered with Geoff Dixon, a colleague since 1975, and formed Silverscreen Films Ltd. The company began its operation with an Australian production –“Peaches” shot in March 2003, and has several other films in various stages of development and pre-production, including *Predicament*, *River Queen*, and *Kiwi*.

MERATA MITA - Producer

Merata Mita has been a pioneering woman producer and director in the New Zealand film industry for the past 30 years, in a career which has seen many groundbreaking productions and provided great inspiration to many other film makers.

She is a partner with Geoff Murphy in Ora Digital, the company which, alongside Silverscreen Films, is producing *SPOOKED*. She is also his life partner and they have worked together on many films, dating back to *Utu*, in which she played the role of Matu, a warrior woman.

Her most recent production is *Hotere*, a documentary about the artist and his work, and she is currently developing a feature film, *Cousins*, written by renowned novelist Patricia Grace.

Mita is best known as the director of the stand-out 1983 feature length documentary *Patu!*, which told the story of the 1981 Springbok Rugby Tour of New Zealand. *Patu!* had a strong impact on indigenous people around the world, particularly black South Africans and earned international acclaim, notably at the London Film Festival, where it was described as “a major documentary of our time”.

Of Ngati Pikiāo descent, she was the first Maori woman to direct a feature film, *Mauri*, which she also produced and wrote. Released in 1988, *Mauri* stars Anzac Wallace, Eva Rickard, James Hayward, Rangimarie Delamere and Geoff Murphy.

Mana Waka, a documentary she produced and directed, resurrected footage of a canoe building project initiated by Princess Te Puea for the 1940 New Zealand Centennial and was made for the country’s 1990 Celebrations.

While in Los Angeles, she (Merata – please give me info for this paragraph)

Formerly a teacher who used Super 8 movie making as part of her class activities, Mita began making films with German film maker Gerd Pohlman in the late 1970s. The most well-known of their documentary collaborations is *Bastion Point: Day 507*, about the forcible eviction by police of Ngati Whatua protesting the appropriation of their land. Their other films included *Karanga Hokianga*, *The Hammer and the Anvil* and *The Bridge: A Story of Men in Dispute*.

She has also been active in developing the cinema culture of New Zealand, writing articles, participating in seminars and running screenwriting workshops.

GEOFF DIXON – Producer

Geoff Dixon began in the film industry in 1966 and worked six years as a cameraman in New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain and Europe. After directing in Australia, he moved back to New Zealand in 1974 and started his own production company, Silverscreen Productions Limited. He has since directed commercials and documentaries, both locally and internationally, through Silverscreen.

International locations include Australia, USA, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, various Asian countries and New Zealand. Geoff worked as 2nd Unit director on several feature films, including *The Bounty* and *Savage Islands*.

He was represented in America by Industrial Light and Magic as a director and has had representation by ICM (USA) for feature films. He also created international associations with Fairfax Films in New York and Smillie Films in Los Angeles.

Silverscreen has matured to be recognised as one of the top creative commercial production companies both in New Zealand and Australia. It has three offices – Auckland, Wellington and Sydney, and has strong international ties in the film industry. In 1999 Geoff expanded the production base at Silverscreen and created two new divisions. Oktobor, an effects and animation company, and Oktobor Interactive, specialising in interactive television and new media.

Oktobor is now the top commercial post production facility in New Zealand, having picked up numerous awards for both international and national work in visual effects and 3D animation. It has since expanded its operation to now include a long form division for feature films. Its credits include two of the three *Lord of the Rings* epics, *Johnny Lingo* a US feature and numerous other New Zealand films.

In 2002 Geoff partnered with Don Reynolds, a colleague since 1975, and formed Silverscreen Films Ltd. The company also acts as a line producer for international productions in New Zealand.

Geoff is also a board director of Film NZ and board member of Taskforce NZ.

REWA HARRE - Director of Photography

Rewa recently won the best cinematography: non-drama award at the 2003 New Zealand Television Awards for his shooting of the arts documentary series *Mercury Lane*.

He has also recently shot several episodes of the critically acclaimed series *Mataku*, both as director of photography and as camera operator. He also recently was operator on some episodes of the US children's action series *Power Rangers: Ninja Storm*, shot in Auckland.

His previous feature films as DP are *I'll Make You Happy*, directed by Athina Tsoulis and *Channelling Baby* directed by Christine Parker.

SHAYNE RADFORD - Production Designer

Shayne began in the film industry as a hairdresser, which is the job he had on his first feature film, Geoff Murphy's *Utu*. He then moved into special effects makeup, which became special effects generally, including props making and animatronics, which, in the way of the New Zealand industry, evolved over time into work as an art director, eventually becoming production designer.

He recently completed 38 episodes as production designer of US children's action series *Power Rangers: Ninja Storm* for Village Roadshow/KP Productions.

He was production designer for four Daybreak Pictures features, including *The Vector File*, *No One Can Hear You* and *Exposure*. He was art director on *Once Were Warriors* and *Desperate Remedies* and years earlier, hairdresser on *Constance*.

MICHAEL HORTON - Editor

Michael was nominated for an Academy Award for his work on *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*.

He also has a remarkable track record on New Zealand films: he edited six of the current Top 10 New Zealand films at the New Zealand box office – *Once Were Warriors*, *Footrot Flats*, *Goodbye Pork Pie*, *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?*, *Utu* and *Smash Palace*.

In addition to *Goodbye Pork Pie* and *Utu*, he has also worked with Geoff Murphy on *Quiet Earth*. He also has a long association with Don Reynolds, who produced *The End of the Golden Weather*, *Sylvia*, *Dangerous Orphans*, *Heart of the Stag*, *Carry Me Back* and *A Soldier's Tale*, all edited by Horton.

Horton's other films include the Peter Jackson/Costa Botes mockumentary *Forgotten Silver*, *Cinema of Unease: A Personal Journey by Sam Neill*, *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*, the influential dramatisation of the Arthur Allen Thomas case, and *Middle Age Spread*, the movie of the Roger Hall play.

COMPOSER – waiting for info

SILVERSCREENFILMS LTD – Production Company

is the newly-formed film and television production subsidiary of award-winning Australasian production company Silverscreen Productions. Co-owners of the new company are Silverscreen founder Geoff Dixon and highly experienced film and television producer Don Reynolds.

ORA DIGITAL – profile to come ex Merata

CLIFF CURTIS - Mort Whitman

Cliff Curtis combines a successful career in Hollywood with memorable roles in New Zealand movies, including Niki Caro's acclaimed *Whale Rider*.

His most recent Hollywood films are *Runaway Jury* with John Cusack, Gene Hackman and Dustin Hoffman for Twentieth Century Fox and Warner Brothers' *Collateral Damage* with Arnold Swarzenegger. Previous films include *The Majestic* with Jim Carrey for Castle Rock Entertainment, *Training Day* with Academy Award winner Denzel Washington, also for Warners and New Line Cinema's *Blow*, with Johnny Depp,

Before returning to New Zealand in 1999 to star in *Jubilee*, he was in *Three Kings*, *Bringing Out the Dead*, *The Insider* and *6 Days 7 Nights*.

His New Zealand career includes *Once Were Warriors*, *The Piano* and *Desperate Remedies*, for which he won best supporting actor award in the NZ Film & TV Awards in 1994. He also won best actor for *The Chosen* at the NZ Television Awards in 1999 and best actor for *Jubilee* in the 2000 NZ Film Awards.

Curtis is Maori, of Te Arawa and Ngati Hauiti descent.

CHRISTOPHER HOBBS – Kevin Jones

His role as Kevin Jones in *SPOOKED* is Christopher Hobbs' first feature film lead role.

He has been working in Australia for the past two years, where he has established himself in guest roles in major television series including *Bad Cop Bad Cop*, *McLeod's Daughters* and *Water Rats*.

He is already well-known in New Zealand for his core cast role as Frank Malone in *Shortland Street*.

His previous film role was as Ray Dew in a short film *The Dishwasher*.

He has made guest appearances on numerous TV variety shows, including *Whose House is it Anyway? Look Who's Famous Now*, *Ready Steady Cook* and *Strassman*,

Trained at Toi Whakaari New Zealand Drama School, his most recent theatrical performance was as Cassio in *Othello* in 2003 at Centrepoint Theatre. In 2002, he played Glen in *Play 2* for the Auckland Theatre Company. He has appeared in theatrical variety performances including *9.45 Live!*, *Variety Club Revival* and *Coca-Cola Christmas in the Park*. He has also played in several radio plays for Radio New Zealand.

JOHN LEIGH – Jimmy Blick

John Leigh's most recent feature films are *Raising Weylon*, a US production filmed in Auckland by Film Factory and *Ozzie* for Daybreak Pictures.

He played Hama in Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Two Towers* and was Bryce Campbell in Jackson's *The Frighteners*. He was Dave in *Stickmen*, directed by Hamish Rothwell.

His other New Zealand feature films are *Chicken* and *Chunuk Bair*, and short films *Bradman* and *Still*.

He has an extensive background in television, and is well known for his portrayal Lionel Skeggins in *Shortland Street*.

He appeared most recently in the acclaimed New Zealand satirical series *Spin Doctors* and the South Pacific Pictures drama series *Mercy Peak*. He played Jimmy the Grip in the Film Factory telemovie *Redhead: the Lucille Ball Story* and a guest role in Village Roadshow/KP Productions *Power Rangers Ninja Storm*.

Other television includes *Xena: Warrior Princess*, *Atomic Twister*, *Jack of all Trades* and *The Life and Times of Te Tutu*.

His theatre experience spans 15 years and includes *Stones in his Pockets*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest*, *Hamlet*, *Three Sisters* and *Bouncers*.

MIRIAMA SMITH – Ruby Elder

Miriama Smith's (Ruby) previous feature films are *Toy Love* directed by Harry Sinclair, *Double Exposure*, directed by David Blyth and the independent US production *The Other Side of Heaven*, directed by Mitch Davis.

She has an extensive career in television, and is currently playing a major recurring role as Ilsa in *Power Rangers Dino Thunder*, now shooting in Auckland for Village Roadshow KP Productions.

She has played Nurse Dana in three series of the critically acclaimed *Mercy Peak* for South Pacific Pictures and is also well known as nurse Awhina Broughton on *Shortland Street*. She starred in "The Magic Flute", an episode of *Mataku*; played Hara in *Moko Toa* for Te Haeta Productions and Ani in *Mirror Mirror* for Gibson Group.

As well as these notable New Zealand productions, she has starred in several overseas productions made in New Zealand, including *Xena: Warrior Princess*, *Young Hercules*, *The Tribe*, *Atlantis High*, *Revelations* and *The Adventures of Swiss Family Robinson*.

She has had lead roles in two short films, *Picnic Stops* and *Moby's Island*.

KELLY JOHNSON - Spook

For Kelly Johnson, who plays Spook, SPOOKED is a return to movies after a 20-year hiatus, during which he has worked as a lawyer in Whangarei. He is known for his leading role in Geoff Murphy's iconic 1981 movie, *Goodbye Pork Pie*.

After that success, Johnson had roles in other New Zealand productions, including Murphy's ground-breaking *Utu*, as well as *Carry Me Back*, *Bad Blood* and *Battletruck* and several theatre productions. He was working in Wellington theatre at the same

time as Cliff Curtis, who was newly graduated from drama school. He then travelled overseas, went to university and graduated as a lawyer, working in Whangarei. He has recently made a comeback into theatre, teaching and performing adult roles with Whangarei Youth Theatre.