

50 ways of Saying Fabulous

A poignantly comic story of friendship for anyone who grew up in
a small town, grew up gay or simply grew up.

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50 Ways of Saying Fabulous

IT IS A TIME OF INNOCENCE
IN A WORLD OF ADVENTURE
WHEN FRIENDSHIPS ARE FOREVER
AND GROWING UP CHANGES EVERYTHING

50 Ways of Saying Fabulous is the second feature film from acclaimed New Zealand director Stewart Main (*Desperate Remedies*). Starring newcomer Andrew Paterson as Billy, *50 Ways of Saying Fabulous* shows the value of embracing difference, by charmingly capturing the journey of a young boy into the realities of his teenage years.

50 Ways of Saying Fabulous was adapted by Stewart Main from Graeme Aitken's novel of the same name and is produced by Michele Fantl and Auckland based company MF Films in association with the New Zealand Film Commission.

The film also stars Michael Dorman (*The Secret Life of Us*), Rima te Wiata and features striking debut performances by Andrew Paterson, Harriet Beattie and Jay Collins. *50 Ways of Saying Fabulous* has an original score by Peter Scholes.



One Liner

A poignantly comic story of friendship for anyone who grew up in a small town, grew up gay or simply grew up.

For 12 year old Billy, growing up is a mystery, until he discovers all he has to be is himself.

Short Synopsis

Sweet, chubby, theatrical Billy was never cut out to be a farmer, but as the only son he's obliged to try. The cows are stubborn and the chores gruelling, but Billy finds escape in a fantasy world playing *Lana*, heroine of his favourite TV show *Adventures in Space*. Not everyone approves of Billy's transformation. On the brink of adolescence, he discovers growing up is more complicated than he could ever have imagined. The film is set in New Zealand's weirdly wonderful landscape, where extraordinary events can occur to wonderfully ordinary people. This is a fresh telling of gay awakening, real, grotesque, funny and moving by turns.



Long Synopsis

"This is an important film – it's about young men falling in love".

Rima te Wiata

Set in the summer of 1975, *50 Ways of Saying Fabulous* is the beguiling story of 12 year-old Billy, who is about to discover that growing up is a lot more confusing than he could have ever imagined. He is a farmer's only son who is out of step with the other boys at his school. He feels they only want to fight and play rugby; he tries to be the same, but feels he was never cut out to be a farmer or a rugby player. Instead, he would rather dream about an imaginary life in outer space. In this world, a turnip paddock becomes a lunar landscape and a cow's tail a head of beautiful blonde hair which transforms him into "Lana" the heroine of his favourite TV show.

When a strange boy, Roy, arrives at Billy's school Billy's world is changed forever. As he learns about his sexuality, everything he knows is called into question, including his lifelong loyalty to his best friend, tomboy Lou, whose world is changing alongside his.

Set in New Zealand's stunning Central Otago landscape, *50 Ways of Saying Fabulous* carries the audience along with Billy as he embarks on life as teenager. Director Stewart Main says his film "celebrates difference and being true to one's self."

50 Ways of Saying Fabulous is a fresh telling of gay awakening, real, grotesque, funny and moving by turns



Production Information

The novel 50 Ways of Saying Fabulous was first published in 1995 by New Zealand born writer Graeme Aitken. The novel received International acclaim and was published in Australia, The U.K. France and Germany.

The screenplay of 50 Ways of Saying Fabulous is both light and humorous while focussing on the important central themes of self identity, being true to oneself and sexual awakening. Producer, Michele Fantl says she was immediately drawn to the story "because as a mother, the story has a warmth and truth that resonates with what I could see was a timeless story even though it is set in the seventies. Billy, our lead, could be any of the young boys I've met over the years, he is a complex character, trying to find his way in a world where he is feeling increasingly alienated".

Stewart Main was first presented the story of 50 Ways of Saying Fabulous while on a year long sabbatical in India. "I was immediately drawn to the script he says, I loved the depiction of one boy's struggle for independence and acceptance set against the detail of everyday life in small town New Zealand." Main travelled throughout India and spent time in Nepal and Calcutta writing the first draft of the script with the Himalayas visible out of his window. Main continued writing and rewriting the script on and off over the next five years. Much of the writing was done on location in the Central Otago to allow Stewart to escape inside the lives of the characters.

Stewart Main is one of New Zealand's most talented directors his first feature film *Desperate Remedies* premiered in the prestigious Un Certain



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Regard Cannes Film Festival 1993. Michele Fantl says "as one of New Zealand's finest talents everyone had been keen for Stewart to direct another feature for a long time". He has directed a number of other documentaries short films and dramas including the 2003 Media Peace award winner *Make or Break*. Many of his projects deal with themes of sexual identity.

Producer, Michele Fantl has been involved with 50 Ways of Saying Fabulous since 1997 and after a long history working with Stewart they both had clear ideas of their ideal crew. Simon Raby was first choice as cinematographer because Michele says he was an "absolute wonder" on Stewart's short film *Twilight of the Gods*. Peter Roberts has been editor on numerous documentaries with both Michele and Stewart. He was awarded best editor at the Media Peace Awards for Stewart's documentary *God, Sreenu and Me* and also for *Make or Break* in 2003. Composer Peter Scholes worked with Stewart on *Desperate Remedies* so Stewart knew he was able to create his vision.

50 Ways of Saying Fabulous has a budget of 3 million New Zealand Dollars and is financed by the New Zealand Film Commission, which is handling International sales.



Location

50 Ways of Saying Fabulous is set in the awe-inspiringly beautiful landscape of the Central Otago in the South Island of New Zealand. The film was shot in the Summer of 2004 in the small towns of Omakau and Ophir. The rich ochre of the landscape in drought forms a majestic background for the film.

Stewart Main found all the key locations for *50 Ways of Saying Fabulous* within a 20 km radius of each other. *Dragonlands*, the pivotal location where Billy and Lou enact their fantasy based on a favourite television show *Adventures in Space* is an extraordinary rock formation. It has an otherworldly quality that perfectly marries Billy's fantasy world and his farm reality.

The production of *50 Ways of Saying Fabulous* took over the small country towns of Omakau and Ophir and redressed them for the 1970s period. Many local residents have on screen roles and the local football teams feature in the hilarious rugby sequence. The locals played a large part in the behind the scenes production and Director Stewart Main says the "production would not have been possible without the strong support of the local residents".

50 Ways of Saying Fabulous is set in the 1970s but remains timeless in its story. Production Designer Ken Turner worked hard in finding appropriate homes in the area as well as sourcing classic cars, bikes and other memorabilia to ensure the 1970s feel.



Casting

"The child leads give soulful, intimate and brave performances. They achieve complex truths within the technical complexity of film." - Stewart Main

Finding the right actors to play the lead child roles of Billy, Roy, Lou & Babe was always going to be critical to the success of *50 Ways of Saying Fabulous*. Michele Fantl says "casting was an extremely long and thorough process". Co-casting director Jan Saussey started the process by placing newspaper advertisements and contacting all of the schools in the Auckland area. Stewart Main then spent over a year continuing the process. In an effort to make sure "that no stone was left unturned" Stewart auditioned every child on the books of acting agents that fitted the brief. However, Stewart had a hunch that his leads would be real life, "authentic country kids" with little or no film experience. Main spent several months on the road travelling to schools all over New Zealand auditioning children for the roles. After an extensive search, Main's initial hunch was proven correct, and as with Keisha Castle-Hughes of *Whale Rider* fame, none of the lead children have any previous film experience.

Careful character development by Main and the brave performances of the children draw the audience into the story, because the characters are loveable. "I was overwhelmed by the extent to which the children gave of themselves", says Main. "The achievement which gives me the most pleasure about *Fabulous* is that together we created a naive intimacy that lets the audience really see inside and understand each character's predicament".



The Cast

"Andrew carried himself so honestly and bravely... I learnt a lot from him"

Michael Dorman

Andrew Patterson (Billy)

50 Ways of Saying Fabulous is Andrew's screen debut. Michele Fantl says the 14 year old Auckland school boy was cast as Billy because he "obviously had the look, but also has a warmth and strength we felt would translate on screen". Although *Fabulous* is Andrew's first film he has been acting since the age of five in various theatre productions. He also has a strong singing and dance background. When Andrew found out he had been cast in the role of Billy he says "I was amazed...I mean you literally sit at home and dream about being up on screen and then it happens".

Andrew plays Billy, a 12 year old who is out of step with the other farm boys at his school. While he tries to be the same, he's not cut out for fighting and playing rugby. Billy is different – he is imaginative, quirky, theatrical and intelligent. His family is supportive and loving, however his preference for "culture over cows" drives his "good kiwi bloke" and farmer father close to despair. Billy's loyalty to his best friend Lou, has been lifelong, but everything Billy is and knows is called into question as he faces up to who he is, who he will be, his sexuality, and what it is to be a friend.

Andrew says he very much enjoyed the experience of being on set. "I didn't want to leave – I just didn't want it to end". Now at high school, Andrew has his sights fixed firmly on an acting career. "Acting is so much fun" he says "When I watch movies now I think about all the people standing out of shot



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and just how many times each scene must have been recorded to get it just perfect.”

HARRIET BEATTIE (LOU)

“I knew immediately Harriet was perfect to play Lou – she is on the cusp of being a woman, but has an androgynous quality that allows you to accept her as a tomboy”

Stewart Main

“She’s amazing”

Michael Dorman

14 year old Wanaka school girl Harriet Beattie plays Lou, Billy’s cousin and a 12 year old tomboy. She’s headstrong, adventurous and likes to be in control. She’s good at everything that Billy isn’t good at, including rugby, farm work, shooting, and fighting. Like Billy, her world is changing and events threaten her self-identity as a tomboy, forcing her to recognise her innate womanliness. Her flush of first love toward Jamie, the sexy new farm hand, upsets her friendship with Billy. Friends become rivals and rivals become enemies, and Lou comes to a new understanding of which is which.

Harriet says her seven week experience on the *50 Ways of Saying Fabulous* set was “amazing”. Harriet lived on location in Omakau. Harriet says “I still had to do homework while the film was being shot”. She then quickly adds with a smile that she didn’t always manage to complete it, “but it didn’t matter because I caught up on it as soon as I went back to school anyway”.

Harriet speaks fondly of her time on set – “my favourite scene was the birthday party scene. It was shot the day after my birthday and it felt like a



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celebration for me as well as for Lou. It was such a fun relaxed day even though we were working". She says that having her long hair chopped short was the hardest part about playing the part of Lou. "I'd never had short hair, and I'm not like Lou – she wanted short hair and I really didn't, but in the end I got over it pretty quickly".

50 Ways of Saying Fabulous is also Harriet's screen debut, although she had taken speech and drama lessons for a number of years and preformed in school productions. Director Stewart Main says he was "immediately drawn to Harriet because of her confidence and innate womanliness", making her ideal for the part of Lou. Harriet says "I loved working on the film and if I'm good enough I'd like to continue acting."



JAY COLLINS (ROY)

"As soon as I saw Jay, I knew he was the one"
Stewart Main

13 year old Kerikeri school boy, Jay Collins plays Roy. The character of Roy is challenging, he is the outsider and the school 'freak'. Roy is a year older than Billy and Lou, and is physically mature. As a city boy, he has had experiences that the country kids have never thought about. From a violent family background he forms a relationship with Billy that is not always reciprocated or understood by his younger friend. His jealousy, frustration and sense of loss give him a tragic streak.

Jay was cast after Stewart visited his school in 2002. Although Jay had no formal acting training he had the exact physical presence Stewart was looking for. "As an actor playing 'the freak', Jay had to make himself very vulnerable", says Main. "He brings to his character a remarkable ability to forgive the wrongs that are done to him". Jay says his family and friends have all been very supportive. "My parents were excited because they've always known I wanted to be in the movies".

Jay says he loved being away on set with all of the other kids. "Acting's more fun than hard – I'd love to do some more."



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Michael Dorman (Jamie)

"Jamie is the catalyst. He helps Billy and Lou move beyond the initial points in their journey. They both look up to him which at first splits them apart but later brings them back together."

Michael Dorman

23 year old Michael Dorman joins the cast in the role of sexy farm hand Jamie. Originally from New Zealand, Michael moved back from Australia to take the role. Michael says he was attracted to the strength of the story of *Fabulous* because "it comes from such a true place". Michael has extensive stage and screen experience and has just finished the latest series of *The Secret Life of Us* playing the role of Christian. He received a Logie Award Nomination as 'Most Popular New Male Talent' for this part.

Michael's character, Jamie, is the free spirit that floats into Billy and Lou's life with devastating consequences. He is a handsome eighteen year old farmhand, free and easy and out for a good time. He becomes the object of desire for Billy and Lou, and the cause of their nemesis. His cocky bravado hides a fatal flaw, cowardice. Michael says he can see similarities between himself and Jamie "we're at a similar stage in life, we've both had our first love and felt a bit bitter...we're still figuring out what life is all about".



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Georgia McNeil Babe

"For a seven year old, Georgia handled the experience amazingly well"

Stewart Main

"I would definitely do another film if I was asked, but now I am just excited about seeing this one on screen"

Georgia McNeil

Georgia McNeil from Queenstown plays Babe, Billy's little sister. She is an observer, a commentator and a meddler, she tags along like a shadow in Billy and Lou's life. She knows all the gossip, but muddles most of it. Finding a seven year old with enough self assurance to handle being away on a film set for eight weeks was a difficult task. Director Stewart Main says Georgia was immediately striking because "she had the right level of impishness to play the role coupled with a strong level headedness".

Georgia says she was not immediately interested in auditioning for the part. "My sister was auditioning for the part and my Mum really wanted me to do it too. Then she said she would give me a chocolate bar if I did it so I said okay." Georgia says she had "heaps of fun" while she was away on set in the Central Otago. "We played hopscotch, went swimming, had bus rides, ate outside – I made lots of new friends". Georgia says school was not completely forgotten during the filming "my teacher gave me this book with maths in it and she gave me some journal books and I had lots of homework."

Georgia says one of her proudest moments in the movie was when she got to say the last line of the film. "You'll have to see the film to hear it – but it's pretty good" she says.



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Rima te Wiata

Aunt Evey

"Rima is so much fun to be around... she cracks jokes all the time and the way she says her lines is just perfect"

Andrew Paterson

"Rima is an amazingly devoted and experienced performer who has talent to burn and a wealth of knowledge about every aspect of the business"

Michele Fantl

With a career spanning over 20 years Rima is the most experienced member of the *50 Ways of Saying Fabulous* cast. She says "I was first drawn to the script because I loved the humour and momentum of the story – it's written in a very colloquial kiwi style. That's good for us to see". Rima plays Aunt Evey, Lou's mother. Evey loves the opera and sees herself as a small but vigorous flower of culture and sensitivity in the cultural desert of country life. She also loves the theatre and has ambitions, but "living in a small community makes it a bit of a dream" says Rima. Evey and Billy are kindred spirits. She is his inspiration, his champion and his safety net when life seems to blow up in his face.

Rima describes *50 Ways of Saying Fabulous* as a beautiful love story. It is light because of its humour, but at the same time it approaches heavy subjects. She says "50 Ways of Saying Fabulous is a story full of the anguish and pain of adolescence - New Zealand has been waiting for this for a long time". Rima says she enjoyed her time on the set of *Fabulous* immensely. "I



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love working with kids. I learnt a lot from them, they just don't have the vanity of adult actors. They just play the actions – and that's what makes them magical on screen”.

Rima te Wiata has featured prominently on both stage and screen, including film roles in Anthony McCarten's '*Via Satellite*' and Megan Simpson's '*Alex*'. Rima is also one of New Zealand's leading stage actors and has had roles in a great range of stage shows from *Grease* to *Macbeth*.

Ross McKellar **Matt, Billy's father**

Ross plays Matt, Billy's farmer father. He is gruff but good-natured. He loves his son, but can't understand him. Matt is trying to keep up with the changes occurring in his life, on both the work and domestic fronts, which are at variance with his pragmatic clear-eyed worldview.

Ross McKellar has featured extensively in the New Zealand film and television industry and in many stage productions. His film credits include *The End of the Golden Weather* and *The Vertical Limit*. His television credits include *Shortland Street*, *Hercules* and *Gloss*.



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Stephanie McKellar – Smith **Rebbie, Billy's Mother**

Stephanie McKellar – Smith plays Rebbie, Billy's loving and accepting mother. She is practical, hardworking and fully supportive of her son. Stephanie is Ross McKellar's wife both on screen in *50 Ways of Saying Fabulous* and in real life. She has had various television roles including *Shortland Street* and *Gloss*, and a wide ranging theatrical background. Stephanie also has a number of theatre directorial credits.

Michelle O'Brien **Belinda**

Auckland based actor Michelle O'Brien has acted for television extensively since 2000. She is most well known as Charlotte in core cast of the New Zealand TV series "*Being Eve*". She has also had roles in *Shortland Street*, *Spin Doctors* and the US Production *Power Rangers*.



Key Crew Biographies

Stewart Main **writer / director**

Stewart Main is one of New Zealand's most talented directors his first feature film *Desperate Remedies* premiered in the prestigious Un Certain Regard Cannes Film Festival 1993 and was bought by Miramax for release in the US, having won numerous awards throughout the world. He and producer Michele Fantl have worked together on a wide variety of projects since their first short film *Twilight of the Gods* in 1995 and the Montana drama *One of Them* in 1998. Stewart Main makes feature films, TV drama, documentaries and short films in New Zealand, often dealing with themes of sexual identity, in both contemporary and historical settings. He is a consummate filmmaker, a passionate student of film history and his background as an editor and First AD means he has a precise knowledge of what is achievable as a film maker.



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Michele Fantl the producer

Michele Fantl, producer, has 15 years experience in the film and television industry. As a partner in the highly successful company Zee Films she produced award winning commercials, high rating television documentaries, music videos and short films. She set up MF Films in 1997 to produce Garth Maxwell's feature film *When Love Comes* (premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival 1998; Sundance 1999), and has continued producing documentaries on a range of topics from ***Jailbirds; Family Life*** to kids going nuts on a bus in *The Big OE* series. Her collaboration with Stewart Main began with the critically acclaimed short film *Twilight of the Gods* (in competition Berlin International Film Festival 1995) the Montana TV drama *One of Them*; plus the provocative documentaries *God, Sreenu and Me* and *Make or Break* (Media Peace Award 2003). Her vision for MF Films is to work with a small group of passionate directors telling New Zealand stories for the widest possible audience.

Cinematographer Simon Raby

Simon has worked extensively as a cinematographer for over twenty years. Before *50 Ways of Saying Fabulous*, Simon worked as the Director of Photography on Unit 2A of the *Lord of the Rings Trilogy* (Directors Peter Jackson and Geoff Murphy). He has also worked as a DoP on many of New Zealand's top drama shows and documentaries. Simon wrote and directed *Headlong*, a 12 minute short film drama Starring Tim Balme and Meryl Main. It was awarded *Best Film Overall* at the 1995 Canterbury International Short Film Festival. It was then acquired by Channel 4 Britain.



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Editor
Peter Roberts

"Peter has passion and expertise"
Michele Fantl

Peter Roberts has been in post-production for a quarter century since his teens in England. A pioneer of digital editing in NZ, he has known Stewart Main for twenty years, and has previously worked with him on two award-winning documentaries.

Composer
Peter Scholes

Peter Scholes is one of New Zealand's foremost conductors and composers. He composed the soundtrack to Stewart Main's previous feature film *Desperate Remedies* and also conducted the soundtrack to Peter Jackson's *Heavenly Creatures*. Before 50 Ways of Saying Fabulous Peter also scored the music for Niki Caro's *Memory and Desire*, which was recorded by the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

Peter's specialist instrument is the clarinet which he studied in Auckland and London. His interpretations received international acclaim when he was prize winner in the 1987 International Gaudeamus Interpreters Competition held in Rotterdam. His conducting credits include the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Prague Symphony Orchestra. He is the Musical Director of the Auckland Chamber Orchestra.



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Production Designer Ken Turner

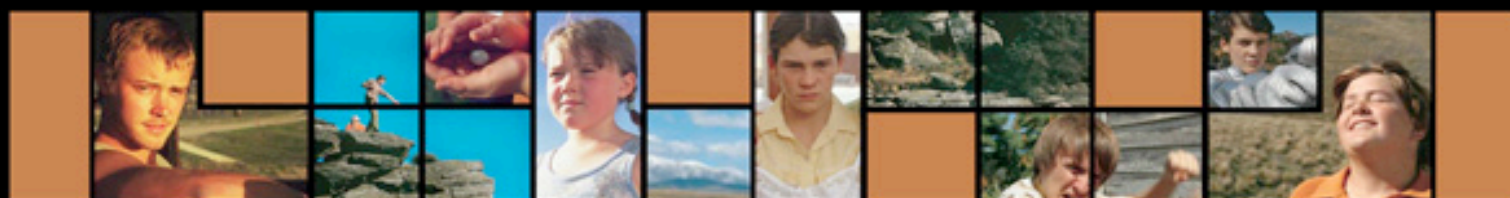
Ken has worked for 18 years in the New Zealand film industry as an Art Director, Production Designer and Construction Manager. His expertise and varied skill keep him in constant demand. He has worked most recently on Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Christine Jeff's *Sylvia* (starring Gwyneth Paltrow) and *Perfect Creature* (starring Saffron Burroughs). Ken has a background in Art and design, but is also a certified trade builder and welder as well as an experienced sculptor.

Costume Designer Kirsty Cameron

Kirsty has extensive feature film experience including *Whale Rider*, directed by Niki Caro, for which she won Best Costume Design at the 2003 New Zealand Film Awards. Her other feature film credits include *Sylvia* directed by Christine Jeffs with Gwyneth Paltrow, *Rain*, *The Price of Milk*, *Channelling Baby*, *When Love Comes* and *Memory and Desire*.

Graeme Aitken Author

Graeme Aitken is the author of two novels, *50 Ways of Saying Fabulous* (1995) and *Vanity Fierce* (1998). He is also the editor of *The Penguin Book of Gay Australian Writing* (2002). *50 Ways of Saying Fabulous* has been published in Australia, the U.K, France and Germany. It is soon to be published in the USA. Originally from Central Otago, Graeme now lives in Sydney where he works as a bookseller. He is currently at work on a new novel.



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Cast List

Billy
Lou
Roy
Jamie
Babe
Matt
Rebbie
Evey
Arch
Belinda

Andrew Paterson
Harriet Beattie
Jay Collins
Michael Dorman
Georgia McNeil
Ross McKellar
Stephanie McKellar-Smith
Rima te Wiata
George Mason
Michelle O'Brien

Key Crew

Writer / Director
Producer
Line Producer
Director of Photography
Editor
Composer
Sound
Production Design
Casting
Costume Design
Make Up / Hair design

Stewart Main
Michele Fantl
Dorthe Scheffmann
Simon Raby
Peter Roberts
Peter Scholes
Dick Reade
Ken Turner
Fiona Edgar & Jan Saussey
Kirsty Cameron
Tracey Sharman

