



CLOSER

Written by Therese Lloyd and David Rittey
Directed by David Rittey

PRESS KIT



.....sometimes silence can be the most revealing thing of all.

New Zealand Screen Award 2005 – Best Short Film
New Zealand Screen Awards 2005 – Best Performance in a Short Film

INTERNATIONAL SALES

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PRODUCTION NOTES

DIRECTOR David Rittey
PRODUCER Amanda Jenkins
PRODUCTION COMPANY AJ FILMS Ltd

35mm Dolby Digital Colour 15 mins 1:1.85

TAG LINE

Sometimes silence can be the most revealing thing of all.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Nathan is fifteen years old and deaf. Haunted by the recent drowning of his older sister and unable to express his own emotions, he feels isolated and alone in the rural town where he lives. So much hidden, his father continues to conceal his grief from both himself and others. Desperate to feel the sense of connection that he once felt with his sister, Nathan is drawn to seventeen year old Liz. Liz seems to offer an escape from his loneliness. However, as Nathan grapples to fit in, his unspoken emotions begin to surface.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Nath is fifteen years old and Deaf. As the hot summer sun beats down on the rural New Zealand town where he lives, Nathan sits inside his bedroom, reclusive and alone. Clouds hang heavy in the sky, but there is little sign of rain.

Inside, Nathan watches a home video of Rachel, his older sister. Who knows how many times he has watched this tape since her death, tracing around the images of his sister who he desperately misses and longs to see again.

Nathan's sense of isolation is heightened by the fact that Michael his father is not fluent in the use of sign language; it's as though Nathan has no way to be understood.

With his mother away, Nathan and Michael are left to grapple silently and separately with their own personal grief at the loss of a sister and daughter. As Michael continues to conceal his grief, a barrier forms between father and son.

Desperate to feel the sense of connection he once felt with Rachel, Nathan is drawn to Rachel's friend Liz who seems to offer an escape from his loneliness and boredom. Unlike Michael, Liz isn't scared to talk about Rachel. Liz tells Nathan about a party that will be happening that night down by the river, the sort of party that Rachel would have gone to.

In an act of both defiance and desperation, Nathan makes his way to the party. He takes a seat and looks around at the other teenagers there, all of who are older than him. In an attempt to make a connection with others, Nathan becomes acutely aware of his difference. Suddenly the line between his feelings for Liz and his feelings for his sister become blurred, and his buried emotions threaten to surface.

Once back at home, Nathan lashes out, venting his frustration on his father. The next morning they quietly sit on the front steps of the house together. Michael gently places his hand on Nathan's shoulder and offers him a simple gesture of understanding.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The inspiration for Closer grew from my own experiences while working as a disability support worker after finishing film school . During this time I worked with people who had a wide range of "disabilities" - including Deafness - and gained insight into the various ways these people communicate and negotiate their everyday lives.

As with other "disabilities" the history of Deaf people is one of stigma and marginalisation due to the lack of understanding of the hearing population. In my opinion, Deafness is not a disability but rather a different way of experiencing the world. It is only referred to as such because the Deaf experience differs to that of the main stream. Therefore, my aim was to open a doorway and capture the sensory experience of a person (Nathan) living with Deafness and to offer the viewer an emotional insight into his experience of the world.

Due to this, I was keen to create a feeling of authenticity and believability for the role of Nathan, so decided that it was most important to cast a Deaf person for this role. After a long search and with the help of the New Zealand Deaf community we eventually found Toby Agnew.

The world of Deafness provides a shifted tone and perspective and a primarily visual way of experiencing the world. This perspective is very subjective, personal and sensory. To reflect these elements, special attention was given to the sound design to enable the audience to become submerged in the Deaf experience in selected moments during the film.

Closer was written to relate directly to both Deaf and hearing audiences. I believe the Deaf realm can also be viewed as extension of the larger human experience - a metaphor for growing up, alienation and loneliness as well as the deep need we all have to feel connected to other people and to touch, feel and be loved. The silent world and it's inherent communication difficulties is also an extension of the inability we can all have at times to truly listen, speak and communicate with each other.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

David Rittey was raised in Christchurch, New Zealand, has lived in Melbourne, Australia and London, UK. He now resides in Wellington, New Zealand.

David's first introduction to film making was at the University of Canterbury where he graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in 1996. He initially went to art school to pursue painting and sculpture but soon found himself drawn to the film department.

In 2000 David attended the Victorian College of the Arts School of Film and Television in Melbourne Australia where he completed a Post Graduate Degree in narrative film. His graduating film, Out of Darkness, received international acclaim and won many awards as it made it's way around the festival circuit. Festival screenings include Edinburgh, Mill Valley, Hamburg and the Brisbane International Film Festival.

David recently joined Silverscreen Productions, a commercial production company based in Wellington, Auckland and Sydney.

Along with producer, Amanda Jenkins of AJ Films, David recently received funding for CLOSER from the New Zealand Film Commission's short film fund. David returned to Christchurch, where he was raised, to film CLOSER.

For it's world premier, CLOSER is in competition at the 2004 Cannes Film Festival.

PRODUCER'S BIOGRAPHY

AMANDA JENKINS has been passionate about filmmaking and filmmakers since discovering the film department at Canterbury University 13 years ago. While completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film she was instrumental in encouraging New Zealand short filmmakers, directing the first competitive Short Film Festival in New Zealand.

Since then, for the past 13 years, she has worked on a number of short films, television programmes, feature films and advertising commercials. Producing on location advertising campaigns for television and print has lead her to work in Australia, Africa and America as well as New Zealand.

Two years ago Amanda set up AJ FILMS LIMITED. Based in the South Island of New Zealand AJ FILMS supports and facilitates national and international commercial productions while filming on location in New Zealand.

Closer is the second short film Amanda has produced for the New Zealand Film Commission and the first film to be produced under the umbrella of AJ FILMS. Both A Quiet Night and Closer were shot in the South Island. Amanda is enthusiastic about the New Zealand screen industry and in her support of emerging filmmakers. "It is a real privilege to be part of the creative filmmaking process, to realise a script to the screen. New Zealand has a wealth of talent and experience with cast and crew, and it is important to nurture that through short film."

AJ FILMS is committed to developing additional film projects that tell Strong New Zealand Stories.

AWARDS

New Zealand Screen Award 2005 – Best Short Film
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FESTIVALS

Festival de Cannes 2004
Melbourne International Film Festival 2004
New Zealand International Film Festival 2004
Sao Paulo Short Film Festival 2004
Palm Springs Film Festival 2004
Vancouver International Film Festival 2004
St Tropez Film Festival 2004
Seagate Foyle Festival 2004
Fajr International Children's Film Festival Iran 2005
Commonwealth Film Festival, Manchester 2005
Rhode Island International Film Festival 2005
Vladivostok International Film Festival, Russia 2005

CAST AND CREW

CAST

NATHAN Toby Agnew
MICHAEL Michael Lawrence
RACHEL Elizabeth McGlinn
LIZ Ellen Simpson
DON Grant Edgar

CREW

DOP Vincent Taylor
EDITOR Jonno Woodford-Robinson
SOUND DESIGN Tim Prebble
MUSIC COMPOSER Victoria Kelly

PRODUCTION MANAGER Amanda Jenkins
1st AD Jane Gray
2nd AD Angela Thomas
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR Paula Granger
CONTINUITY Sue Harrison-South
LOCATION SCOUTS Anne McKay
Graham Thompson (GT)
LOCATION MANAGER Max Bridge
UNIT MANAGER Diane Winter

FOCUS PULLER John Cridlin
CLAPPER LOADER Fraser Satherly
VIDEO SPLIT OPERATOR Tim Richards
GAFFER Andy Rennie
BEST BOY Bevan Hancox
LIGHTING ASSISTANT George Husband
GENERATOR OPERATOR Chris Ruane
KEY GRIP James Creevey
GRIP ASSIST Glenn Richards
GRIP ASSIST Scott Kelly
ART DIRECTOR Stephen Mateer
STANDBY PROPS Robert Siataga
ART DEPARTMENT ASSIST Jodie Stack
ART DEPARTMENT RUNNER Isaac Chambers
SOUND RECORDIST Hammond Peek
BOOM OPERATOR Corrin Ellingford
WARDROBE DESIGNER Kenna Worthington
MAKEUP ARTIST Glennys Creevey
STILLS PHOTOGRAPHER Gillian Weavers

CATERERS Moveable Feasts
STOCK Kodak
CAMERA SUPPLIED BY Metro Film
LIGHTING EQUIPMENT Brightlights
GRIP EQUIPMENT Gripworks
VIDEO SPILT EQUIPMENT Dean Thomas
MOTOROLA RADIOS Film Radios.com Queenstown
FREIGHT HANDLERS Xtreme Forwarding
CASTING AGENT WELLINGTON Rachel Bullock Casting
CASTING AGENT AUCKLAND Suzanne McAleer
CASTING AGENTS CHRISTCHURCH Dawn Walsh
Anne Hadfield

TOBY'S INTERPRETOR Evelyn Patterson
ELIZABETH'S INTERPRETOR Simon Baldock
INTERPRETOR Kyla Bishop
COMMUNICATOR Marlene Beale
COMMUNICATOR Tony Swindale

POST PRODUCTION SOUND Parkroad Post
DIAGLOGUE EDITOR Chris Todd
EFFECTS EDITOR Matt Lanbourne
FOLEY ARTIST Carolyn McLaughlin
RE RECORDING MIXER Michael Hedges
ASSIST RE RECORDING MIXERS John Boswell
Gilbert Lake
PROCESSING LABORATORY The Film Unit
EDITING FACILITIES Oktobor
POST PRODUCTION The Film Unit
POST PRODUCTION COORDINATOR Brian Scadden
FILM POST LIASION Sharon Leamy
NEG MATCHING SERVICES Jay Berryman
OPTICAL EFFECTS Brian Scadden
DIGITAL EFFECTS Shanon Moratti
SENIOR COLOURIST Collin Harrison
COLOUR GRADER Simon Tomlinson
TITLE DESIGN Jonny Kofoed
SUBTITLES & CREDIT DESIGN Wynter Blathway
SUBTILE TRANSLATION Jo Rittey