

# Cow

Valladolid International Film Festival 2001  
Best Short Film Script - New Zealand Film Awards 2001



# Presskit



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# Production Notes

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Writer/Director            Michael Bennett  
Producers                 Chloe Smith and Simon Ambridge  
Production Company      53 Productions Ltd

Colour                      12 minutes                      35 mm                      1:1.85                      Dolby Digital

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## Log Line

A fable about two men and a cow lost at sea in search of land.

## Director/Writer

# Michael Bennett

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## Synopsis

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*Cow*, a 12 minute black comedy shot on 35mm, is jokingly described by writer/director, Michael Bennett as "yet another entry in the well-worn genre of aquatic bovine musical comedies". More seriously, *Cow* is an allegorical tale about how relationships can fall apart over the silliest things. For the two men adrift on an endless ocean with their cow, an unfortunate Act of God sets off an escalating series of events that propel their friendship towards chaos and disaster. *Cow* stars New Zealand acting greats Ian Mune and Martyn Sanderson as two old friends on a particularly odd journey. The story is told without dialogue, the characters "talking" to each other only through the playing of their guitars. The open ocean was entirely created in a soundstage, featuring lighting and camerawork by award winning director of photography, Waka Attewell. Auckland musician Nigel Gavin composed and played the guitar "conversations".

*Cow* is a story about the disintegration of a friendship. The image of two people stuck together in a small vessel, struggling to make their way together across uncharted territory has always struck me as a great allegory for the key relationships of our lives. Continually battered by outside forces beyond their control, what these two men need to survive, more than anything else, is each other. But on the high seas of life, sometimes even the closest bond can be tested when events take a turn for the worse. Coming from New Zealand, an island nation at the bottom of the world where all of our ancestors arrived after bobbing across vast expanses of ocean, being lost in a wide empty seascape is a powerful symbol for human frailty in an overpowering environment. We decided to create the environment of the film on an interior film set, an alternative reality that recreates the sense of the isolation and solitude of the ocean without trying to create a slavishly literal representation of the sea. The more I write, the less I believe dialogue is actually very important in the scale of ways we communicate. In *Cow* I wanted to tell a story where the main characters only communicate non-verbally. Apart from the mooing of the cow, the guitars are the only "voices" heard in the film.

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# The Producers

## Chole Smith & Simon Ambridge

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*Chloe Smith* started in the New Zealand film industry in 1983. She has spent the past eight years as a producer with Pacific Renaissance Pictures, the makers of XENA – WARRIOR PRINCESS and HERCULES – THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS. Prior to that, she was production manager for Jane Campions award winning THE PIANO, Alison McLeans CRUSH amongst other feature films and television series. She co-produced FOREVER, a one-hour dance work created by choreographer Douglas Wright, which was part of the prestigious WORK OF ART television series.

*Simon Ambridge* has spent the past six years working for Pacific Renaissance Pictures, initially as a first assistant director, then as production manager and finally as co-producer. Before that, he was first assistant director on feature films THE WHOLE OF THE MOON , BONJOUR TIMOTHY, television drama series ONE WEST WAIKIKI, MRS PIGGLE WIGGLE and short films LITTLE SAMURAI, I'M SO LONESOME I COULD CRY.

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# Credits

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## Cast

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<b>Long</b>	Ian Mune
<b>Short</b>	Martyn Sanderson

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## Crew

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<b>Writer and Director</b>	Michael Bennett
<b>Producers</b>	Chloe Smith and Simon Ambridge
<b>Executive Producer</b>	Dorthe Scheffmann
<b>Editor</b>	Eric de Beus
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Waka Attewell
<b>1st Assistant Director</b>	Simon Ambridge
<b>Production Designer</b>	Robert Gillies
<b>Costume Design</b>	Jane Holland
<b>Music</b>	Nigel Gavin