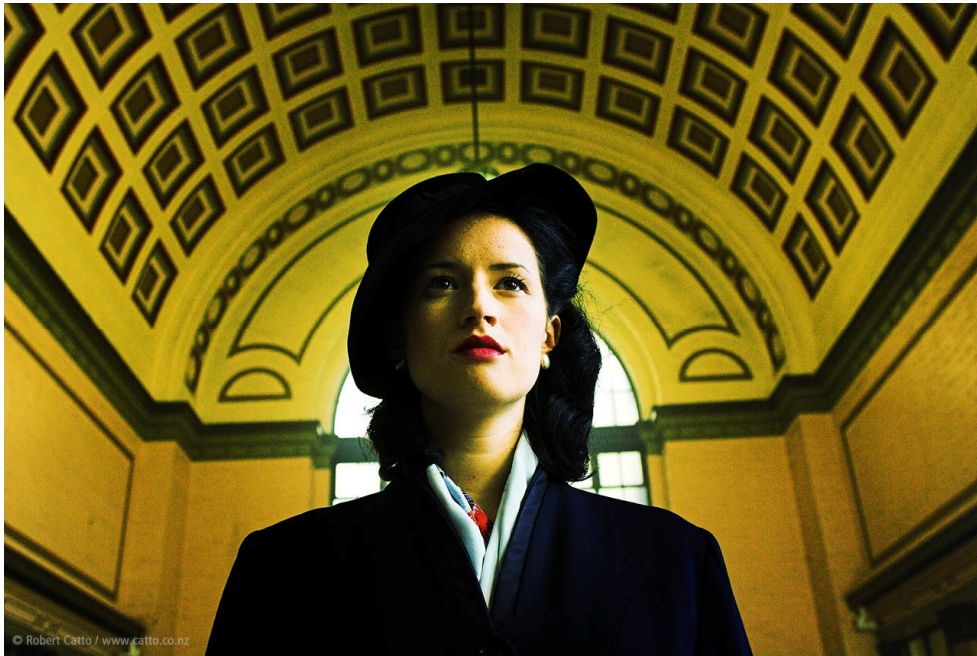


2006 Telluride Film Festival

Dead Letters



PRESSKIT

www.quarter-acre.co.nz
www.deadlettersfilm.com

I N T E R N A T I O N A L S A L E S

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N E W Z E A L A N D F I L M

Dead Letters

Essential Information

Writer/Director	Paolo Rotondo
Producer/s	Fraser Brown & Gemma Gracewood
Production Company	Quarter Acre Pictures Limited
Technical Information	35mm
Film Ratio:	1:1.85
Sound:	Dolby Digital 5.1
Running Time	13 Mins 20 Secs
Country of Production	New Zealand
Date of completion	2006
Sales	Juliette Veber, New Zealand Film Commission email juliette@nzfilm.co.nz Tel: +64 4 382 7686

Log Line

In WWII Wellington an unlikely romance sparks amidst the stacks of air graph letters destined for 'our boys' abroad.

Short Synopsis

On the 'home front' in 1943, Ngarie and Gerald sort air graph letterforms destined for New Zealand soldiers abroad. A tiny act of heroism brings together this unlikely pair in an unconventional love story that cleverly blends fact with fiction.

Long Synopsis

It's 1943, the world is at war, and in New Zealand, the Capital city of Wellington is teeming with US Marines preparing to head up into the Pacific Arena. 'Our boys', the Kiwis, are far away fighting in North Africa, Crete and Italy. Meanwhile at home, a young woman, Ngaire, is doing her bit for the war effort at the Central Post Office, sorting the new air graph letters to be sent abroad. As she methodically sorts the lovingly written notes, she is carrying a private burden. Gerald, a film projectionist, volunteers at the mailroom ensuring that the air graph technology is working correctly. He is intrigued by Ngaire and on this particular morning, takes advantage of a quiet moment to approach her. His timing couldn't be worse, and his attempts to connect with Ngaire fail miserably. Later that night, at the 'flicks', a woman cries out in the darkness when she sees her son upon a donkey, waving letters to a newsreel camera in front of the Pyramids of Giza. Ngaire watches, transfixed, as Gerald approaches the mother and guides her to his projection booth for another private viewing. As Gerald watches Mum watching her son, he makes a spur-of-the-moment decision, which to Ngaire watching from the shadows, is possibly the most heroic wartime act she's witnessed. Having found a kindred spirit, she reveals her secrets to him.

Film Festival Screenings

2006 Telluride Film Festival, USA
2006 MIC Homegrown Film Festival, New Zealand
2006 Telecom New Zealand Film Festival, New Zealand
2006 Italian Film Festival, New Zealand
2006 Short Fuse Film Festival, New Zealand
2007 Film Festival Salento Finibus Terrae, Italy
2007 Mill Valley Film Festival, USA
2007 Show Me Shorts Film Festival, New Zealand

Awards

Best Script for a Short Film Award – 2006 Air New Zealand Screen Awards, New Zealand

Director's Notes – Paolo Rotondo

The story of 'Dead Letters' appealed to my sense of romance. The unconventional aspects of this love story make it interesting to me. Ngaire and Gerald are not our traditional war heroes. Both act in exceptional ways making their small acts of humanity heroic. I wanted to create an unexpected love in such an exceptional time.

Our story adopts the romantic connotations, conventions, style and themes of the World War II 'period' but gently subverts them. We integrated the convention of the 'Newsreel (propaganda) film' with our own live action footage. In this way we could seamlessly blend our characters with archival footage. This device is used for expositional, dramatic and comic effect. Ultimately culminating in the major turning point in the film. The 'newsreel' film helps to add an authenticity and context to our characters and their world. The 'newsreel' provides us with a strong visual reference of the times while being part of the narrative.

Our research into the period especially by our Production Designer, Grant Major, gave us a superb foundation to set our story on. Clever use of locations and superb Art Direction give Dead Letters the impression of a much bigger film. This was important thematically to establish a large world where two individuals could seem so insignificant. The visual juxtaposition between public and private worlds is carefully constructed to reinforce our lead characters journeys. I feel that 'Dead Letters' captures, with authenticity and heart, the events of a mad time in History but more specifically the story moves us with its universal timeless humanity.

Director's Bio – Paolo Rotondo

Paolo has been working in Film, Television and Theatre in New Zealand as a writer, actor and director. As an actor he has had leads in New

Zealand Film Commission films 'Stickmen' and 'The Ugly' (Director's fortnight, Cannes 1997). In television Paolo has starred in shows that have sold around the world, including 'The Insider's Guide to Happiness', 'Shortland Street' and 'Xena - Warrior Princess'. Paolo wrote and starred in his play 'Little Che' about Che Guevara's South America (years before the 'Motorcycle diaries'). Paolo has made 3 Short Films. Recently his short film 'The Freezer', which he wrote and directed, has been seen in festivals around the world. He was also awarded the 2006 Italian Film Festival Scholarship this year and will be travelling to Italy to attend the Venice International Film Festival and work for the production house Due A on internship.

Production Company – Quarter Acre Pictures Limited

Created in 2004 by Fraser Brown, Gemma Gracewood and Paolo Rotondo to produce outstanding, narrative driven, cinematic tales for film and television, Quarter Acre Pictures is the next generation of professional Kiwi filmmakers. The directors bring complementary skills developed through years of practical experience in every facet of the industry. Quarter Acre Pictures is currently developing several feature, documentary and television projects.

Producer - Fraser Brown

Fraser is a gifted producer and outstanding actor. Graduating from Toi Whakaari - NZ Drama School in 2001, he has had consistent lead roles in theatre and television including the multi-award winning *Insider's Guide to Happiness*. With an extensive business background and a B.Com from Otago University, Fraser's production credits include *Riding the Wave – The Whale Rider Story* and short films *Truant* and *Nothing Special* (in competition, Cannes, 2005).

Producer - Gemma Gracewood

Gemma has forged a successful, multi-faceted career since gaining her degree major in TV Production from AUT. A broadcaster herself, she has a reputation for producing exceptional talent in the form of playwrights, television presenters, and radio personalities such as Kim Hill. Gemma was an advisor/press secretary for the New Zealand Government prior to taking up her current position as producer of weekly TV One arts show *Frontseat*, which was named a finalist for 'Best Current Affairs Programme' at the *Qantas Media Awards* in 2004.

Production Designer - Grant Major

Arguably the world's leading production designer, double Oscar winner Grant Major's credits include *King Kong*, *LOTR*, *Whale Rider* and he is currently designing Niki Caro's next film, *Vintners Luck*.

Composer – Gareth Farr

A 'master of music' from 'the Eastman School' in Rochester, New York, Gareth Farr is one of New Zealand's leading contemporary composers,

“Gareth is the most amazingly prolific and talented composer. He makes music very accessible to young and old alike”

Right Hon. Helen Clark Prime Minister of New Zealand

Editor – Margot Francis

One of New Zealand's leading editors, Margot won an Emmy™ Award for editing feature documentary, *Sarafina – Voices of Freedom*.

Key Crew

Written and Directed by	Paolo Rotondo
Based on a short story by	Jolisa Gracewood
Produced by	Fraser Brown Gemma Gracewood
Executive Producer	Catherine Fitzgerald Blueskin Films
Director of Photography	James Cowley
Production Designer	Grant Major
Costume Designer	Lesley Burkes-Harding
Make Up Supervisor	Allie Rutherford
Editor	Margot Francis
Music Composer	Gareth Farr
Sound Designer	Tim Prebble
Visual Effects	Eric Gambini

Cast

Ngaire	Yvette Reid
Gerald	Gareth Reeves
Daisy	Wickham Pack
Jimmy	Simon Vincent
US Marines	Curtis Vowell Will Harris Fraser Brown
Post Office Ladies	Abby Marment Olivia Bryant Amanda Baker Amy Walker
Post Office Supervisor	Tom McCrory
Cinema Usher	Nick Bond
Egyptian Guide	James Ashcroft
Ramses the donkey	JJ

Crew

1 st AD	Rod Smith
2 nd AD	Sarah Rose
3 rd AD	Kevin Armstrong
Continuity	Aria Harrison
Production Coordinators	Megan Fowlds Sal Coleman
Focus Puller	Jason White
Clapper Loader	Dusty Millar
Video Split	Alex Bishop
Gaffer	Alan Wilson
Best Boy	Byron Sparrow
Lighting Assistants	Taipua Adams Graeme Tuckett Tony Toufexis Rob Larsen
Grip	Olly Coleman
Grip Assist	Luke Saalbrey
Remote Crane Operator	Murray Love
Sound Recordist	Ken Saville
Boom Operator	Corrin Ellingford
Standby Props	Ben Whale
Art Department Assistant	Jacqui Allen
Costume Supervisor	Caroline Fenton
Wardrobe Assistant	Emily Smith
Make Up Artist	Jaime Leigh McIntosh
Titles & Credits	John Strang
Animal Wrangler	Caroline Girdlestone – Hero Animals
Stunt Supervisor	John Osbourne
Unit Supervisor	Helen Sales
Barista	Raylene Beals
Catering	Ministry of Food
Stills Photography	Robert Catto
Projectionist	Walter McGinnis
Technical Consultant	John Bell
Post Production	Park Road Post
Post Production Supervisor	John Newell
Colour Grading	Clare Burlinson
Dialogue editor	Chris Todd
Casting	Mike Dwyer, 321 Action
Casting Assistants	Olivia Bryant, Emily Mowbray