

MEDIA KIT

HELMUT MAKES A QUILT

A Short Film



FEATURING **NIC BUTLER & PATRICIA PHILLIPS** WRITTEN BY **LEVI SLAVIN** DIRECTOR **GREG WOOD** PRODUCER **DECLAN CAHILL** CINEMATOGRAPHY **GINNE LOANE**
EDITOR **PUCK MURPHY** PRODUCTION DESIGNER **CHRIS ELLIOT** COMPOSER **WILLIAM RICKETTS** SOUND DESIGNER **MICHELLE CHILD**
ADDITIONAL EDITING **CUSHLA DILLON** RE-RECORDING MIXER **GILBERT LAKE** PRODUCTION MANAGER **ZARA HAYDEN**

EXIT
presents
in association with the New Zealand Film Commission

HELMUT MAKES A QUILT

Sometimes love comes knocking.
Sometimes it's delivered in pieces.

logline:

When pen-pals Marion and Helmut decide they can't be apart a moment longer, they use their passion for quilting to break him out of prison.

Duration 16min 20sec
Genre Black Comedy
Capture Format 35mm
Aspect Ratio 2.35:1
Completed November 2012
Production Exit Films
Funding NZ Film Commission
Country of origin New Zealand

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Director Greg Wood
Writer Levi Slavin
Producer Declan Cahill
Director Of Photography Ginny Loane
Editor Puck Murphy
Additional Editing Cushla Dillion
Production Designer Chris Elliot
Music Will Ricketts
Sound Design Michelle Child
Production Manager Zara Hayden
Re-recording mixer Gilbert Lake

Helmut Nic Butler
Voice of Helmut Vadim Viledogorov
Margeret Patricia Phillips
Warden Geoff Lambourne
Young Guard Kirk Bremner

PARK ROAD
POST PRODUCTION

EXIT

**ROBBER'S
DOG**
A FILM COMPANY

**NZ
FILM
COMMISSION**

**PERCEPTUAL
ENGINEERING**

TOYBOX



Short Synopsis

HELMUT MAKES A QUILT is a dark comedy about a prison inmate who falls in love with a quilter through the prison pen-pal scheme. Told without dialogue, the story unfolds through the a series of narrated letters. The prisoner is HELMUT, a simple but gentle character who has been locked up for so long he has all but forgotten life beyond the walls. The quilter is Margaret, a sweet but lonely woman with a passion for patchwork and quilting. Over the course of the film, Margaret teaches Helmut to quilt and love blooms. When the two decide they can no longer be apart, they use their quilting skills to break Helmut out of prison.

Synopsis

Helmut is a bit of a misfit in prison. He's not really a bad person - he was probably in the wrong place at the wrong time. But he's learnt to survive with a little help from the Warden and a job in the laundry to keep him occupied. That is, until his world is turned upside down by a letter from Margaret.

Like Helmut, Margaret is also a loner. But she distracts herself by obsessively making colourful quilts. She can quilt just about anything. She even sends Helmut a simple quilting pattern in her letter, a colorful oven mitt. Very soon, they become pen-pals through their letters and with each letter, Margaret sends Helmut another quilt project, which he happily undertakes using the only materials available to him - blankets, prison uniforms and whatever else he can find - all in various shades of grey.

Through the exchanging of quilts, their friendship develops into love and for a moment, they forget about the impossibility

of their physical separation. One day however, Helmut wakes up with the harsh reality of this predicament upon him. Suddenly he feels like the prison is the most unbearable place on earth. Just when a future together seems futile, Margaret offers up a solution - with the help of their quilting, she hatches a plan to get him out.

Sweet, surreal and absurd, Helmut Makes a Quilt is not a typical love story. Shot without dialogue, the entire narrative is told through their letters, set against haunting prison landscapes and intricately detailed quilts, which bring the story to life more lyrically than literally. As they exchange quilts, their lives, though separated by great distance, are eventually stitched together in a quilted montage of grey prison blankets and florid patchwork.





Director's Notes

Helmut Makes A Quilt is not your typical short film. It was an ambitious story to tell within the framework of a short: it's narrative spans months, possibly years and there are many characters and themes. However, it was its multi-faceted nature and strength of characters that drew me to this script in the first place. It's story felt so complete and taught with ingredients - like a feature distilled into a concentrate. Yet remarkably, the film is filled with space - something rarely felt in a short.

I also loved the film's dynamic range - that it encompasses the extremes of light and dark, sweetness and brutality, poignance and farce. For this reason, the film is hard to put in a box - it is certainly comedic, yet also laced with sincerity and amusing observations on human relationships.

As a 'narrative tool' in constructing the film, we imagined that we'd found a box of letters between two pen-friends Helmut, a prisoner and Margaret, an obsessive quilter. Using this premise, the letters become the 'narrative spine' of the film, meaning that the images are what we imagine might have taken place as we read their correspondence. It allowed us to treat the images more lyrically - which freed us from having to be too realistic with the setting or the characters or what they do. It allowed us to weave some farcical threads into the film, which are crucial in

grounding it in black comedy. We also imagined that some of these letters might be missing, so deliberate gaps appear before, after and during the film.

This premise of an imagined series of events also meant we didn't have to locate the film in any particular time or place - it could have happened in the 1960's or yesterday and it's characters could have been corresponding between different continents.

Contrast is something we explored a lot too. Beginning with our characters and the worlds in which they live - they couldn't be more opposing. Then, as they are drawn together through the exchanging of quilts, their respective worlds mingle, Margaret's colourful quilts filling up Helmut's monochromatic prison cell and visa versa.

Writers' Notes

Helmut Makes A Quilt is a black comedy about two odd pen-pals who fall in love so gradually and so deeply they don't notice when madness starts to creep in.

Due to the unusual combination of themes, images and content, we wanted to tell the story in a suitably unusual way. So we chose not to have dialogue. Instead relying entirely on narrated

letters placed carefully over loaded images.

What excited us most about this approach was the freedom this structure provided. What we found was that with this freedom came many other challenges.

The biggest was ensuring the audience still felt emotionally connected to a silent character. This was probably the most involved part of the process. We found ourselves constantly tinkering and shuffling to get the emotional balance right.

For the viewer not to notice love's madness creeping in, we felt we had to make madness seem normal. We did this by knocking normality askew in the first scene. Then gradually dialing up the insanity in one slow arc to the end of the film. Coupling this with the slow pace of the unfolding love story, we felt that the audience wouldn't notice things had gone too far until it was too late.

The next major hurdle we found when editing silent pictures, is having the freedom to change structure. Normally synced dialogue would heavily dictate an editing structure. In this case we had ultimate freedom, to try different combinations of words and pictures until we had the most powerful, haunting combination. We were able to try hundreds of options in which, much to the horror of the producers, we did.





Greg Wood

With a background in design and art direction, Greg Wood initially explored film through experimental cinema. He has exhibited/screened/performed in various festivals and galleries over the last two decades.

Greg is also an accomplished TV commercials director, working through Exit (Films) based in Auckland and Australia. In his commercial work, he has not only been able to exploit his experience in the arts, but also develop his skills in telling stories, which is usually a key ingredient in TV advertising.

Levi Slavin

Since the late 90's Levi Slavin has worked as an advertising creative in Australia, London and New Zealand. In 2009 he studied screen writing at London Academy, before moving back to NZ in 2010 where he is currently based at Colenso BBDO in Auckland. Over the last fifteen years, he has worked on some of the world's most prestigious and demanding clients, winning both effectiveness awards and creative accolades along the way;

including Cannes, D&AD, One Show, Clio, London International, New York Festivals, AWARD, Effies and Axis - this year breaking the New Zealand record of 12 Cannes Lions at the Cannes International Festival of Creativity. The most creative awards won in the southern hemisphere.

When he isn't writing TV commercials, he writes screenplays, two of which have received funding.

Declan Cahill

A hugely unpopular singer/songwriter in the early 80s, Declan was forced to develop other talents: apologising, running away very fast, and producing.

Fortunately, one of those talents ended up being his calling. And Declan spent the next three decades producing some of the country's most loved commercial work.

In 2000, Declan changed his name to Declan and teamed up with acclaimed director, Greg Wood. Together they built Automatic Films - a small kit robot they named after a film company.

Declan is currently New Zealand's tallest producer.

Puck Murphy

Although Puck worked as an editor some years ago, he is known throughout the film industry today for his exceptional talent in compositing and the manipulation of images in online post production (commonly referred to as a 'Flame artist'). He has a raft of acclaimed TV commercials, feature and short film credits to his name.

In this regard, Puck brought an exciting and unique approach to editing the film. Not only was he able to tackle the film from a more wholistic angle (knowing how far a given image could be manipulated whilst still in the offline editing phase), but he was also able to work in a more instinctive and less linear fashion. This approach was to become invaluable as the film's narrative was refined and developed during the post phase of production. Working closely with the writer and director, Puck was able to shape the film's narrative arc more organically.





CASTING

Auckland Annalise Patterson
Dunedin Barbara Maree-Power

CAST

Helmut Nic Butler
Helmut (Voice) Vadim Viledogorov
Margaret Patricia Phillips
The Warden Geoff Lambourne

The Young Guard Kirk Bremner
Guards Ken Gorrie, Ian Loughran
Hate Anthony Partridge
Scary Inmate Daniel Wadsworth
Violent Inmate Mark Neilson
Tattooed Inmate Shane Waldron
Laughing Inmate John O'Brien
Naked Inmate David Corballis
Councillor Barbara Power
Glazier Richard Huber
Narcoleptic Man Harley Neville
Nazi Inmate Steven McNamara
Cellmate#1 Andrew Cook
Cellmate#2 Joel Rees
Cellmate#3 TK
Fighting Inmate #1 Andy Cave
Fighting Inmate #2 Pasquale Brenna
Margaret's Hands Marlene Milverton

DUNEDIN CREW

Line Producer Zoe Hobson
1 Assistant Director Craig Sinclair
Prod Manager / 2Nd Ad Aaron Watson, Lisa Hastie
Prod Assist Nick Mulder
Dunedin Prison Rep Glenn Dickel

Focus Puller Simon Temple
Cam Loader Pat O'Neill
Vid Split Adam Nelson-Misa

Gaffer Jo Bollinger
Best Boy Max Cattrick
Lx Assist Steven Kilroy
Grip Josh Dunn

Grip Assist Robert Howie
Sound Nigel Bunn

Costume Standby Justine Tindley
Makeup Supervisor Brae Toia
Makeup Assist Christal Allpress
Unit / Catering Lisa Hastie, Aleeza Stettner
Essential Soup Chef Sharon Watson

AUCKLAND CREW

Associate Producer Jonathan Gerrard
Production Assist Bex Webb
1st Assistant Director Jen Butcher

Focus Puller Simon Temple
Clapper Loader Alyssa Kath
Gaffer Phil Totoro
Lighting Danny Fepuleai, Epuna
Grips Jerry Mauer, Evan Pardington

Art Assist Genevieve Smith
Costume Stylist Natalie Keane
Makeup Jo Cleland
Production Runners Imogen Cahill, Joey Vaessen
Unit Becs Voykovic
Catering Christina Domecq

AUCKLAND SECOND UNIT

Director of Photography James Cowley
Production Manager James Watson
1ST AC Bruce Polwart, Simon Temple
Video Split Vince McMillan
Grip/Gaffer Karl Saunders, Steve Joyce
Set Construction Tom Wolf
Runner Ryan Mansfield

THE QUILTERS

Head Quilter Anya Whitlock
Senior Quilters Caroline Larnach
 Marlene Milverton
 Sue Lim
Quilters Bridget Baus
 Catherine Ellis
 Fiona Ward
 Gemma Long
 Irena Kennedy
 Josephine "Parathyroid" Gray
 Kerry Bloxwich
 Kiri Schumacher
 Laura Armstrong
 Sox Teng
 Stacey Shave
 Rachele Pedersen

POST PRODUCTION

Online & Flame Artist Puck Murphy
Flame Perceptual Engineering
Telecine Services Toybox
Processing Film Lab, Park Rd Post
Soundpost Park Road Post
Music Mix Roundhead Studios
Title Design Title Design - Kate Slavin

