

henchman

Press Book

Writer	Roseanne Liang
Director	Roseanne Liang
Producer	Vanessa Alexander, Sacha Waldegrave, Kim Knight
Production Company	Henchman Productions

Colour
35mm
1:1.85
12 mins
Dolby

Log line:

Sometimes, henchmen dream of musicals...

Synopsis:

Henchman

Rufus makes his living playing tough guys. Henchmen, heavies, villains, baddies- you name it, he's done it. However, underneath the heavy jaw and jutting brow yearns a hopeless romantic, a desperate soul who wants to be the all-singing-all-dancing romantic lead.

The only person who seems to see past the tough guy exterior is the props girl. On opposite sides of the set, they are little more than strangers until one fateful night, when Rufus and the props girl happen upon each other while bouncing down the aisles of art department on inflatable moonhoppers. Embarrassed and shy as mice, they arrange a tentative date.

The fact is that Rufus is a hopeless romantic. When he daydreams and accidentally breaks into a cheesy love song during a take, his actor friend Wilbur tries to talk some sense into him. Looking the way they do- like archetypal baddies- Rufus simply needs to come to terms with the awful truth: people like him and Wilbur don't get to do love.

Rejected on sight at the audition of the musical version of *Titanic*, humiliated by complete strangers who presume to know his character from the way he looks, Wilbur's words cut deep. Outside the props girl's window on the night of their date, Rufus looks at his reflection. His mean, henchman face. His big henchman body. Realising that Wilbur is right, it seems the best thing to just walk away.

Rufus walks the dark city streets. An imposing looking stranger bumps into him and begins to pick a fight. Rufus breaks. He falls back on the one thing he knows he can do well: beating the crap out of presumptuous jerks.

As the stranger slumps before him, bloodied and broken, Rufus suddenly hears someone yell "Cut!". He turns around, bewildered, as the crew around him break out in applause. Rufus is on set. Once again, he's playing the henchman perfectly, and the crowd love it.

Utterly ashamed by what he has done, Rufus flees from the harsh lights of the set. He runs to the only thing that can save him: the loving arms of the props girl. There, by the dim light of the art department storage room, he holds onto her for dear life and begins to sing, clear and true.

As if it were the most natural thing in the world, the entire art department joins him in a beautifully choreographed dance. Rufus sings the Perfect Lovesong to the props girl- his one true love, his only chance for salvation. The sun shines and the birds sing as he spins around her, feet possessed by Astaire.

As the last sweet note escapes from his lips, the props girl looks deep into the henchman's eyes.

And they kiss.

The End.

Director's Notes:

Henchman is post-modern love story. On the one hand, it flies in the face of Hollywood convention and declares to the world that indeed, everybody does get to love somebody sometimes, whether they are pretty or not; however, it also ends on a fantastical finale that in all reality, is probably the hallucination of a lovesick desperado.

I wanted *Henchman* to be uplifting, yet bittersweet. Audience members will invariably take from the end what they will- the incurable romantics (like me) will imagine a happily ever after, while the more cynical (me also) will imagine Rufus in therapy.

Either way, I wanted to tell a playful story about an odd henchman. I wanted to tell it with a number of set pieces that encompassed a wide range of human emotion from rage and humiliation to love at first sight.

I wanted the story to be funny, thought-provoking, touching. I wanted everyone to understand that Rufus' need for love was something that we all shared.

In the end, *Henchman* is a result of my own incurable romanticism. It is a story born from a diet of romance films, and pays homage to their sunny outlook. Even if the end is unlikely, a kiss is still a kiss. I like to believe that even in this cynical world, everyone has a chance at happiness, even if it's all in one's head.

Henchman was my first short film shot on film. The experience could not have been better. Challenging and educational, I was lucky enough to have a tremendously supportive crew, a D.O.P that I could trust implicitly, and producers who did their all to bring my vision to life. The lead actor, Bruce Hopkins, was a joy to direct, and completely perfect for the part.

It was just my luck, too, that halfway across the world in London a band by the name of The Divine Comedy had just released "The Perfect Lovesong". This song could not have suited the tone of the film better. Intelligent, funny and honest, it poked fun at all the soppy things I wanted poking at, while remaining undeniably sweet.

Henchman is my kind of off-beat romantic comedy. Without its bittersweet ironies, its triumph of love against adversity wouldn't seem so poignant. Delusional or not, *Henchman* has a happy ending. If anyone who saw it allowed some part of themselves to fall for its sweetness, then my job would be done.

The Director: Roseanne Liang

Roseanne Liang graduated from the University of Auckland's Master of Creative and Performing Arts programme in September 2003. *Henchman* was her thesis project.

Roseanne began making films as a first year undergraduate student in 1998, and each subsequent offering has exceeded the expectations of the last. The film made before *Henchman*, called *Filmworthy*, won the national youth TV2's 2001 film award and claimed Best Actress Award at the International Drifting Clouds Film Festival in New Zealand. Standing firm against international competition, Roseanne's latest and last 'student' film, *Henchman*, was selected for the prestigious Sydney and London 2003 film festivals, while also claiming the Best Actor Award at the Festival du Cinema de Paris 2003.

Roseanne currently directing her next short film, *Rest Stop*, funded by the New Zealand Film Commission. She is also developing what hopes to be her first feature film.

As a supplement to her personal work, Roseanne works in the New Zealand film and television industry as an editor and actress.

The Producer : Vanessa Alexander

Vanessa Alexander was nominated for an International Emmy in 2002 for producing and directing *Being Eve* - A comedy series for teenage girls that went on to sell to over 25 countries – including Australia, the U.S. and Canada. Over the last 10 years she has won – the International Student Playwrighting Competition, SPADA 'Young' Filmmaker of the Year, a Jury Prize at Oporto, a Gold and Silver World Medal at the New York Festival, Best Series at the NZTV Awards, and the Prix Grande at the Danube Television Festival.

A writer who learned to direct and then got sucked into some producing – she is currently in development on a new feature (A LIFE IN ROMANCE) and executive producing short films for the New Zealand Film Commission. Two out of three of Vanessa's short films screened at this year's Sundance Festival – with "Two Cars One Night" going on to pick up the Panorama Short Film Prize at Berlin. Vanessa also moonlights as a contract drama director, a script consultant, a university lecturer, and recently completed two months with the development team at Working Title UK. She has a MA in Film, a BA in Drama, a Postgraduate Diploma in Directing, and has studied at various times with Joan Schekel, Arista, Steven Bochco Productions and the Royal Shakespeare Company. She is also in possession of two children, a dog, a violin and an extremely untidy house.

Credit list:

Written and Directed by
Roseanne Liang

Produced by
Vanessa Alexander

Sacha Waldegrave
Kim Knight

Director of Photography
Richard Harling

Cast (in order of appearance)

Rufus	Bruce Hopkins
Knock-out Girl	Bodelle de Ronde
Hunky Guy	Daniel Cowley
Director	Jochen FitzHerbert
Wilbur	Ben Baker
Casey	Fiona Maule
First A.D.	Marc Laureano
Casting Head 1	Justin Kean
Casting Head 2	David Stewart
Dancer Girl	Claire Barrett
Art Dept. Person	Sacha Waldegrave
Big Dude	David Blowes

On Set Extras

Amy Barber
Dominic Hannah
Angeline Loo
Holly Shepheard
David Stewart

Dion Christie
Kim Knight
Guy Shepheard
Anastassia Smirnova
Hugo Victor

Audition Extras

Hillary Clift
Joellene Gilbert
Jala Siezen

Kim Dwan
Rachel Impey
Nele Siezen

Sandeep Shergill

All-Dancing Extras

Claire Barrett
Katie Burton
Rachael Moss

Lisa Marie Brayshaw
Adam Leys
Sophie Murton

Production Manager	Annora Gollop
Production Assistant	Angeline Loo
1 st Assistant Director	Jochen FitzHerbert
2 nd Assistant Director	Angeline Loo
Continuity	Adrienne Moyle
Camera Assistant	Alex McDonald
Clapper Loaders	Kim Porter Anna Stylianou Vanessa Wood
Split Operator	Justin Kean
Gaffer	Hugo Victor
Grip	Kim Worthington
Grip Assist	Donna McConnell
Sound Recordist	Mark Storey

Boom Operators Krystal Henderson
Amy Barber

Art Director David Stewart

Make-up and Wardrobe Holly Shephard
Make-up Assist Guy Shephard

Dance Choreographer Claire Barrett
Dance Chory Assist Sophie Murton
Fight Coordinator Robert Bruce

Catering by Wild Wild Kitchen

Unit Donna McConnell

Editor Roseanne Liang
Editing Consultants Zane Holmes
Gary Hunt

Visual Effects Andrew Shanks

Post Production Supervisor Richard Harling
LB2 Films

Telecine Colourist Linzi Kan
Telecine Images Post
Original Grade Miquel Ubeda
Inferno Operator Miquel Ubeda

Rushes Processing Atlab New Zealand
Negative Matching Fine Cut

Post Production Atlab Australia
Digital Services Atlab Australia
Colour Grader Oliver Fontenay
Digital Supervisor Robert Sandeman
Compositors Rebecca Dunn
Sandeep Vengnahar
Michelle Hunt

Sound Designer Carl Smith
Sound Supervisor Chris Burt
Sound Facilities The Inside Track

Composer Andrew McMillan
Blackbridge Productions

“Perfect Lovesong”
Composed and Performed by the Divine Comedy
EMI Records 2000

“Sweetness”
Composed and Performed by Yes
Atlantic Records 1969

Thanks to:

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Telecom mobile

At lab

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And most of all
Stephen Harris

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