

I'M GOING TO MUM'S

PRESS KIT

PRODUCTION NOTES

Writer/Director:
Lauren Jackson
Producers:
Andrew Cochran
Jeremy Macey

Production companies:
chopperguard inc.
Godwit Films
Midnight Billy
in association with the
New Zealand
Film Commission

Country of production:
New Zealand
Completion date:
2012
Shooting format:
RED MX
Screening format:
HDCam, QT ProRes
Aspect ratio:
16:9
Duration:
12 mins 32"
Genre:
drama/comedy/family
Colour
English dialogue

CAST

Jacob:
Duane Wichman-Evans
Gwen:
Narelle Ahrens
Anthony:
Jarod Rawiri
Random Kid:
Croi O'Sullivan

FESTIVAL DISTRIBUTION

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ONE LINER

Jacob is eight years old and his parents dress him funny. Stuck in the middle of a fresh divorce, he takes drastic fashion action to make himself heard.

SYNOPSIS

Jacob (8) is caught between two households. His parents Anthony and Gwen have split up and their escalating hostility plays out through the clothes they force him to wear. Nice clothes musn't travel to the enemy parent, slogan T-shirts become tools of spite and Jacob winds up looking bizarre. Bullied and fed up, Jacob embarks upon a peaceful protest: he'll put anything on, he just won't take it off. Jacob stubbornly transforms himself into a smelly Michelin man, pushing his parents to the limits. Frazzled and frightened, they do the unthinkable: they sit down and talk. Jacob can't believe his balaclava-ed eyes! The layers come off and Jacob emerges to play under the sprinkler in the back yard. The divorce hasn't gone away, but some of the baggage has.

FESTIVAL SELECTION

2013
Berlin (Generation Kplus)
New York International Children's
Boston International Children's
Oberhausen Short Film
Los Angeles International Children's
San Francisco
Filem'On Brussels

INTERNATIONAL SALES

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WRITER/DIRECTOR'S NOTES

I'm Going to Mum's is a story with heart, set in the complicated world of divorce. When the going gets tough, good parents slip up and their child takes charge. Enter Jacob, an eight-year-old boy who splits his time between two parents at war.

This story was inspired by my own experiences of divorce plus those of my friends and acquaintances. I spoke to several parents sharing care of children and every single time, clothing came up as a day-to-day issue. A central image kept coming to my mind of a boy marching towards me, declaring "I'm going to Mum's" / "I'm going to Dad's". He was stuck in a fresh divorce and looked different each time I saw him, depending on what outfit his parents had dressed him in. Each outfit was worse than the last and I began to wonder... how extreme could this get? What if the kid finally rebelled? What form would that rebellion take? Why should a child strip themselves of one parent, just to please the other? How could this boy assert his right to hold on to all of himself at all times? What if he became a walking metaphor for his mum and dad's baggage? The idea felt bittersweet — to explore a familiar, slightly painful topic with a light touch.

I'm Going to Mum's is a story about innocence, division, role reversal, loyalty, and autonomy. It's about the right to lead a whole life. My aim is to have the audience laughing, but really gunning for this family at the same time. There's a lot of curiosity about the dynamics of "shared care". I'm Going to Mum's owns up to all the difficulties and craziness of living between two homes. But rather than preach or judge, the film offers hope. Yes, adults can react badly when their egos are hurt, but if they put the children first, they can move beyond it.

Casting was relatively straightforward. On advice from Miranda Harcourt (who has expertise in working with children on film), I began with the parents. Miranda advised that a great working relationship with the screen-parents would strengthen the child actor's performance. I knew from the outset that I wanted Narelle Ahrens and Jarod Rawiri as Gwen and Anthony. Both actors have a sympathetic and sensitive screen presence, which I think helps the audience see the parents as human beings trying their best in a tough situation. I was never interested in "goodies" and "baddies". Both Narelle and Jarod are parents themselves and were fantastic with Duane Wichman-Evans, who I cast in the lead role of Jarod. Duane already had a wealth of screen experience and shone in the auditions. I found it reassuring that Duane comes from a supportive and loving family, because it meant that the situations I put him in really were just "make believe" for him, no matter how convincing he was in each scene!

The complex rhythm of Jacob's shared-care arrangement is echoed in the rhythmic repetition of shots and scenes. The beat of Jacob's feet hitting the footpath feeds into the percussive slap-dance rhythm which jolts to a stop when Jacob talks to us. Then it all starts up again. However the film is not an out and out comedy. Jacob's rebellion shifts us into a darker style of humour. As the conflict escalates the film changes gear. Poignant moments of reflection and beauty occur amidst the chaos: Anthony (Dad) through the glass door; Gwen (Mum) watching Jacob sleep; Anthony alone in the empty street.

The film was shot around the inner city streets of Arch Hill and Parnell, Auckland. The eclectic, idiosyncratic nature of the houses is a great match for the quickly shifting moods of the film. The film has the temperamental feel of Auckland weather, reflecting the uncertainty of Jacob's home-life. It is not until the final sprinkler scene that we see a truly bright, sunny day. Jacob is again soaked with water, but this time it's a cleansing shower, washing away all the baggage. Jacob's clothes provide pops of colour that match and complement the urban architecture. The feel of each parent's home is distinctive, to help us appreciate the constant adjustment Jacob makes. At Mum's we hear birdsong throughout the tastefully renovated family home. Dad's apartment is a bit of a jumble of dishes and washing, with street sounds rising up through the windows.

In the opening sequence, Jacob approaches the camera over and over again. Each time, we gain new insight into his family life, through the clothes he is wearing and the snippets of information he shares with us. The camera is fairly static to begin with, allowing Jacob to approach us. The shots are fairly wide on Jacob, portraying him as small in his own world. However as the pace picks up and Jacob's situation becomes more untenable, the camera gains mobility. Jacob is still stuck in his situation, but his mounting frustration energises the camera and he interacts with it directly, pushing it out of his face in the bedroom. More close ups find their way into the film as Jacob focuses his thoughts and takes action. Through protest Jacob forces himself into the centre of his parents' attention.

Until Jacob takes control of the situation, other characters pop into frame unexpectedly, showing Jacob has no agency over his life. Anyone can enter his life at any time and he is used to complying. A car drives through shot, splashing him with mud; Random Kid enters to give him a shove; his parents yank him in and out of frame. This "push-me-pull-me" effect belies the harder truth of the film — Jacob's parents are blind to the effect they are having on him.

This all changes once Jacob is in the driver's seat. His peaceful protest is not direct disobedience. Jacob will wear what he's told, he just won't remove it. By the end of the film, Jacob is the one popping in and out of shots, a tragicomic bundle surprising people. Jacob is also beginning to frame his own world on his own terms. At the beginning of the final meeting between the parents, we see Gwen and Anthony framed in one of Jacob's POV balaclava shots. Ironically, the oval eye slit of the balaclava frames his mum and dad much like the romantic iris shot in an old Hollywood film. However Jacob's strange, labored breathing anchors us in the tension of the situation. Much of the film has been shot from Jacob's eye level, to help us sense the world from his perspective. I had a great time working with Simon Raby who, on several occasions, made genius use of a Red camera on the ground in a wok!

There is minimal use of music in the film. Drew McMillan's soundtrack is stripped back and percussive. We worked with musicians to construct and record rhythms from childhood clap games and Pacific Island slap dances. These beats help the film retain a sense of playfulness, even in the heavier moments. There are some key percussive sounds too: the slamming of car doors, the woomph of Jacob hitting the pavement when pushed, the rip of Jacob's puffer jacket — he is literally torn.

I'm Going to Mum's has been an exciting first short for me. I'm proud of the excellent team we created and of the end product, which so closely matches those first imaginings of mine. I would attribute this positive outcome to the strong working relationship I enjoy with producers Jeremy Macey and Andrew Cochrane. I certainly look forward to the next project.

WRITER/DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Lauren Jackson

Lauren trained at Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School and has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Auckland in German and Film, TV & Media Studies. She works as a director, playwright, actor and drama tutor.

Lauren attended film school in Germany in 1998, and in 2004 represented New Zealand at the 40th International Young Theatre Practitioners' Forum in Berlin. Lauren has had her writing on the German and New Zealand film industries published in New Zealand and in Germany. In 2010 Lauren was selected to participate in Script to Screen's short film lab, and in 2012 wrote and directed the short film *I'm Going to Mum's*. Lauren has further film projects in development.

Lauren has directed various stage productions for the Pacific Institute of Performing Arts, Smackbang Theatre Company, Auckland Theatre Company and Four Afloat Productions. Lauren began her career playing the lead in the NZ feature film *Alex*. Following her graduation from Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School in 2001, Lauren has enjoyed a variety of stage, screen and radio work. Theatre performances include *Mr Marmalade*, *Land of Make Believe* and *Mr Kolpert* at the SiLO Theatre. Her screen work includes roles in TV series: *This is Not My Life*, *The Jaquie Brown Diaries* and *A Thousand Apologies*; and in feature films: *Perfect Creature*, *1nite* and *The Tattooist*.

In 2005 Lauren won the Chapman Tripp Most Outstanding New Playwright of the Year Award for her play *Exchange*, which premiered at BATS in the Young and Hungry season. *Exchange* has been published by Playmarket Press and produced by Radio New Zealand. In 2010 Lauren directed *Exchange* for Auckland Theatre Company's Young and Hungry festival. In 2009 Lauren wrote *Polly Hood in Mumuland* — a Pacific adaptation of *Red Riding Hood* — which premiered as part of Pasifika 09. *Polly Hood in Mumuland* was also produced by Auckland Theatre Company in association with the Pacific Institute of Performing Arts for its successful 2011 season. Lauren has been commissioned to write the 2013 touring play for the 'Duffy Books in Homes' programme.

PRODUCER BIOGRAPHIES

Andrew Cochrane

Upon completing an undergraduate degree in English Literature and Film Theory, Andrew began his career in the production department of feature films in the roles of production coordinator, manager and supervisor. A fifteen year career working on studio films required some time for recuperation and creative reflection — which came in the form of a two year hiatus studying for a master of arts degree in Sydney.

Andrew recently returned to New Zealand for the independent feature film *Emperor* starring Tommy-Lee Jones and Matthew Fox, and alongside his continued involvement as a freelance contractor on international features, Andrew is developing several future projects with Lauren Jackson and Jeremy Macey. *I'm Going to Mum's* is Andrew's first project as a Producer.

Jeremy Macey

Jeremy Macey studied Russian and German language and literature at Victoria University of Wellington, and worked in theatre before crewing in art department and production on shorts and TVCs. In 1997–2001 he lived in Moscow where he initially worked in TVC production at BBDO. He then freelanced as interpreter/fixer on documentaries and features. He produced and directed the documentary *Shpilt Mir* about the revival of klezmer in the former Soviet Union.

In 2001 Jeremy came back to New Zealand to study documentary and to freelance in TV and film. He produced and directed the documentary *Highnote*, following the National Youth Choir tour to East Europe and Russia. He worked as development coordinator at the NZ Film Commission before returning to the industry as producer of the feature *Hook, Line and Sinker* which was released theatrically in 2011. In 2012 Jeremy produced two short films under his banner Godwit Films including *I'm Going to Mum's*. He is currently producing and writing.