

KITCHEN SINK

Written and Directed by Alison Maclean

New Zealand
FILM COMMISSION



Te Tumu Whakaata Taonga



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WRITER / DIRECTOR: Alison Maclean

PRODUCER: Bridget Ikin

PHOTOGRAPHY: Stuart Dryburgh

ART DIRECTOR: Grant Major

EDITOR: David Coulson

SOUND DESIGN & MIX: John McKay & Chris Burt

WIGS: Cheryl Newton

ORIGINAL MUSIC: The Headless Chickens

CAST:

Theresa Healey – The Woman

Peter Tait – The Man

Annagreta Christian - Schoolgirl

LOGLINE:

From the bowels of the kitchen sink comes a dark and tender love. A nightmare come true...

AWARDS:

1989 Cannes Film Festival – Nominated, Palme d'Or Best Short Film

1989 New Zealand Film and TV Awards – Short Film Award

1989 Sitges International Fantastic Film Festival of Catalonia – Best Short Film

1989 Sydney Film Festival – Audience Award for Best Short Film

1990 Tampere Film Festival – Grand Prix

1990 San Francisco Film Festival – Golden Gate Special Jury Award

1990 Fantasporto Film Festival – International Fantasy Film Award, Best Short Film

1991 Odense International Film Festival – Youth Award

SELECT FESTIVAL SCREENINGS:

1989 Cannes Film Festival, France

1989 Sitges International Fantastic Film Festival of Catalonia, Spain

1989 Wellington Film Festival, New Zealand

1989 Melbourne Film Festival, Australia

1989 Sydney Film Festival, Australia

1990 Clermont Ferrand International Short Film Festival, France

1990 Tampere Film Festival, Finland

1990 International Film Festival Rotterdam, Netherlands

1990 San Francisco Film Festival, USA

1990 Fantasporto Film Festival, Portugal

1991 Sundance Film Festival, USA

1991 Odense International Film Festival, Denmark

2002 Locarno Film Festival, Switzerland

2014 San Sebastián International Film Festival, Spain

2019 Zomerpark Feest, Netherlands

2020 Tampere Film Festival, Finland – 50th Anniversary Retrospective Programme

DIRECTOR BIO – ALISON MACLEAN:

Born in Canada and raised in New Zealand, Alison Maclean came to international attention when her short film *Kitchen Sink* (1989) was nominated for the Palme d'Or at Cannes Film Festival and won eight awards at festivals worldwide. Starring a young Theresa Healey, it is arguably the most successful short film to come from New Zealand. Her debut New Zealand feature film *Crush* (1992), produced by Bridget Ikin, also played in competition at Cannes, and was the only debut feature In Competition.

Alison then moved to the US and directed her second feature, *Jesus' Son* (1999), which won the Little Gold Lion at the Venice Film Festival and earned Alison a Best Director nomination.

Alison has since made her home in New York, working professionally as a director for the last two decades in commercials and television drama. She has directed episodes of the critically acclaimed series *Sex in the City*, *Carnivale*, *The Tudors*, *The L-Word*, and *Gossip Girl*.

In addition to drama, Alison co-directed the documentary *Person of Interest*, which screened in competition at the Sundance Film Festival, and the comedic documentary/narrative hybrid *Intolerable*, which screened at the Edinburgh, Toronto, L.A., and Hamptons International Film festivals.

Alison has continued to make short films, and is developing a number of feature projects. She directed the New Zealand feature film *The Rehearsal*, for which Maclean co-wrote an adapted the screenplay with novelist Emily Perkins, from Eleanor Catton's first novel of the same name.

"The story came to me in much the same way as events unfold for the woman in the film. I could see this hair sticking out of the plughole and on closer inspection, the story began to emerge and to transform itself in quite a surprising way.

It's a dark little fable about fear and desire - about a woman who re-fashions a monster into a man, and finds herself falling for her creation. In some sense I see it as a Pygmalion-type story, with the genders reversed." – **ALISON MACLEAN**

TECHNICAL INFORMATION:

Film Title: Kitchen Sink
Genre: Fantasy / Horror
Duration: 14 minutes
Original Format: 35mm, Black & White
Remastered Format: DCP
Frame Rate: 24fps
Aspect Ratio: 1.85:1
Country of Origin: Aotearoa, New Zealand
Year of Completion: 1989
Production Company: Hibiscus Films
Language: English

***Kitchen Sink* was digitised with funding from the New Zealand Film Commission's Digitisation Programme**

DIGITISATION CREDITS:

Production Company: Park Road Post Production
Producer: Dean Watkins

Digital Restoration, Colour Grade and DCP Creation of *Kitchen Sink* at Park Road Post Production, Wellington, New Zealand

DIGITISATION NOTES:

The Master Neg for *Kitchen Sink* was used for the scan, as this film element contained all of the original colour timing information. Once the film had been carefully inspected and prepared, it was scanned on an Arri film scanner at 2K resolution as a 10-bit DPX sequence.

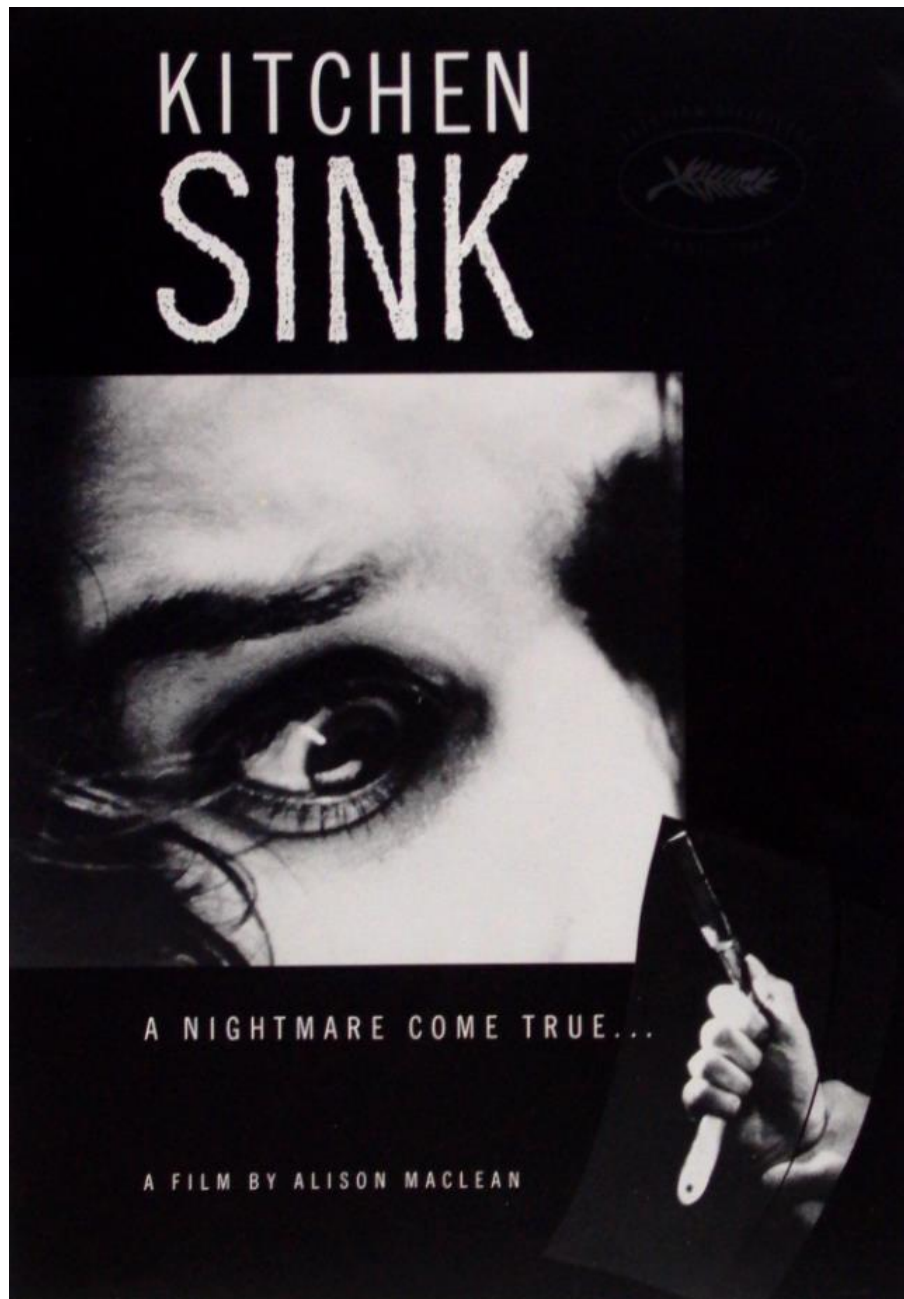
These DPX files were then used by Park Road Post's restoration team to work on the digital restoration of the film, frame by frame.

Firstly, a stabilization pass was applied to remove any unintended instability that might have been introduced and remove any obvious jumps on the original film splices. A de-flicker pass was done to remove any flicker that had also been introduced by the film duping process. A variety of semi-automated restoration tools were then used to seamlessly paint out and remove the more obvious dust, scratches and chemical marks from every frame of the film. Grain/noise reduction was applied across the film to reduce and manage the amount of visible grain that was present, but some is still retained for a more classic filmic look.

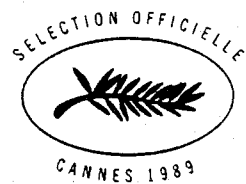
Once the restoration was completed, the film was handed over to Park Road Post's colourist, Jon Newell, who then started work on the colour restoration process. Initially, the film was colour balanced to remove any unintended photochemical colour cast that had been introduced due to degradation of the dyes and film stock. Then a second colour grading pass was done to carefully enhance and maintain the creative look that was established by director Alison Maclean and cinematographer Stuart Drysburgh.

A 5.1 audio track was transferred and digitised off digitised mag and sent to Park Road Post's digital mastering department to be synced to the newly restored picture. This digital intermediate was then used to create a master tape version in HD CamSR, plus several master digital file formats for streaming and a 2K DCP for theatrical release.

Writer/director Alison Maclean was fully consulted throughout the digitisation process.



WHAT FOLLOWS IS THE ORIGINAL PRESS KIT FOR 'KITCHEN SINK', FROM 1989



KITCHEN SINK

***FROM THE BOWELS OF THE KITCHEN SINK,
COMES A DARK AND TENDER LOVE.***

WRITER & DIRECTOR ALISON MACLEAN

PRODUCER BRIDGET IKIN

14 mins 35mm black & white



**Produced by
HIBISCUS FILMS LTD
in association with the
Short Film Fund of the
New Zealand Film Commission**

**SALES
NEW ZEALAND FILM COMMISSION
BOX 11 546 WELLINGTON
TEL 04 859 754 FAX 04 849 719
NEW ZEALAND**

KITCHEN SINK

Melbourne Film Festival - Programme Notes

Far from the social realist domestic drama, this film is a wicked and witty shocker and teaser. With a mere 14 minutes of black and white footage, a New Zealander demonstrates how to hook and rivet an audience while simultaneously sparking off an explosive minefield of metaphors. Witness the demise of the female gothic and the birth of the feminist fantastic.

DIRECTOR & SCREENWRITER ALISON MACLEAN

Born in Ottawa, Canada, in 1958, Alison Maclean spent much of her childhood in Canada, emigrating to New Zealand with her parents as a teenager. She is a graduate of the Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland where she majored in film and sculpture, and now lives in Sydney.

She and producer Bridget Ikin have collaborated on two films, and are currently developing a feature together, again from an original idea by Alison, entitled **CRUSH**.

Since leaving art school, she has directed three films -

RUD'S WIFE, a family melodrama, 30 mins, 1985

Co-written by Alison Maclean and Norelle Scott

"one of the best New Zealand films of the last decade" William Dart, RIP IT UP

TALKBACK, a drama about a night on talkback radio, 50 mins, 1987

Co-written by Alison Maclean and Geoff Chapple

Produced by Bridget Ikin, Hibiscus Films

Best Short Film, New Zealand Film Awards 1988

"Like an excellent short story, the whole movie is pure economy"

John Parker, METRO MAGAZINE

KITCHEN SINK, 1989

In Competition, Cannes 1989

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"The story came to me in much the same way as events unfold for the woman in the film.

"I could see this hair sticking out of the plughole and on closer inspection, the story began to emerge and to transform itself in quite a surprising way.

"It's a dark little fable about fear and desire - about a woman who re-fashions a monster into a man, and finds herself falling for her creation. In some sense I see it as a Pygmalion-type story, with the genders reversed.

PRODUCER BRIDGET IKIN

Bridget Ikin is committed to quality independent filmmaking, and through her company Hibiscus Films chooses to work collaboratively with directors on a few selected projects. She co-produced with John Maynard the landmark series with new writers and directors, **ABOUT FACE** in 1985, as well as Alison Maclean's **TALKBACK** in 1987, and **KITCHEN SINK** in 1989.

She is currently producing **TO THE IS-LAND** with director Jane Campion (dir. of **SWEETIE**, In Competition, Cannes 1989), a series based on the acclaimed trilogy of autobiographies by Janet Frame.

She is an alternate member of the New Zealand Film Commission; the Deputy Director of the Len Lye Foundation; and a member of the Film Panel of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council.

THERESA HEALEY plays THE WOMAN

Theresa was living in London when she was asked to audition for the role in **KITCHEN SINK**. Alison Maclean had seen a photograph of her while she was writing the story, and had had her in mind from the start. Theresa felt strongly enough about the role, to be drawn back from London for the production.

Since graduating from the New Zealand Drama School in 1985, she has acted in many of the country's professional theatres, and has a particular interest in New Zealand plays. **KITCHEN SINK** is her first film lead, after some small roles in television dramas.

PETER TAIT plays THE MAN

Peter Tait is attracted to playing "slightly bent characters". He first worked with Alison Maclean on **TALKBACK** in 1987, and he enjoys her way of developing characters through intensive rehearsal.

Peter Tait is an original performance poet and an actor, who has performed in most of New Zealand's theatres, and many television dramas.

CREDITS

Writer/Director

Producer

Photography

Art Director

Editor

Sound Design & Mix

Music

1st Assistant Director

3rd Assistant Director

Production Assistant

Script Assistance

Continuity

Camera Assistant

Gaffer

Grip

Camera Trainee

Wigs & body suit

Special Effects Make up

Special Effects & Models

Set Construction

Art Dept Assistants

Caterers

ALISON MACLEAN

BRIDGET IKIN

STUART DRYBURGH

GRANT MAJOR

DAVID COULSON

JOHN McKAY & CHRIS BURT

THE HEADLESS CHICKENS

TREVOR HAYSOM

ADRIANA TUSCIA

KATHERINE FRY

JIM WILKINS

MELANIE READ

JUSTIN TOPZAND

KEVIN RILEY

BRIAN HARRIS

JACQUIE CLARKE

CHERYL NEWTON

BRYONY HURDEN

GYRO CONSTRUCTIVISTS

ANDREW TURNEY

CHRIS FITZPATRICK

ANT TIMPSON

RUSSELL CHAMBERS

TIM WORRALL

JEREMY GRAHAM

DAVID MARTIN

ADRIANA TUSCIA

TIM WORRALL

SARAH MACNAB

GILLIAN PHELAN

CAST

The Woman

The Man

Schoolgirl

THERESA HEALEY

PETER TAIT

ANNAGRETA CHRISTIAN

TV & ENTERTAINMENT

NZ film wins more awards

Best short film pick

Kitchen Sink, a surreal fantasy by New Zealand film maker Alison Maclean, has added more awards to an already impressive list of honours.

The 14-minute black and white film, which was funded by the New Zealand Film Commission, has been voted best short film at the Oporto International Film Festival in Portugal.

The honour follows a Special Jury Award in the Film and Video, Short Narrative Category, earlier this month at the Golden Gate Awards Competition in San Francisco.

Last year, Kitchen Sink picked up awards at the Melbourne and Sydney Film Festivals, Sitges International Film Festival in Spain, and in New Zealand where it won the Listener Film and Television Award as Best Short Film.

In New Zealand so far, only film festival audiences have been treated to this dark, witty fable from the bowels of the kitchen sink.

Local cinema audiences will get a

chance to see Kitchen Sink soon, however, when it goes on general release with Sweetie, the latest film from another rising star in the New Zealand film industry, Jane Campion.

Sweetie has already met with critical acclaim overseas.

Campion is currently working with Kitchen Sink producer, Bridget Ikin on a three-part series on the life of New Zealand author Janet Frame.

The series is based on Janet Frame's three autobiographical works, *Angel at My Table*, *To the Is-Land* and *The Envoy From Mirror City*.

The three 50-minute films are being jointly funded by the New Zealand Film Commission, Television New Zealand, Britain's Channel 4 and the ABC.

Meanwhile, another New Zealand film, *The Mighty Civic*, picked up an award at the Portugal festival.

Seen recently by New Zealand television audiences, *The Mighty Civic* won a special jury award for broadcast television — arts and humanities category.

The documentary showed the over-the-top but much loved interiors of Auckland's historic Civic Theatre and delved into its colourful past.

The Mighty Civic was produced with finance from the New Zealand Film Commission and Television New Zealand Commissioned Independent Productions.

Peter Wells and Stewart Maltby, who made the documentary *Up in the Family*, the sensitively told story of an Aids death.



NEW ZEALAND actor Theresa Healy, who plays the woman in *Kitchen Sink*.

NZ film wins awards

The short film which this week won the *Listener* film award as Best Short Film of the Year has also won two awards at major Australian film festivals.

Kitchen Sink is directed by Alison Maclean and produced by Bridget Ikin for her company, Hibiscus Films, of Auckland.

At the Sydney Film Festival, *Kitchen Sink* won the audience's vote as best short film in the entire programme.

And in the short-film competition at the Melbourne Film Festival, the jury awarded a certificate of merit to *Kitchen Sink*.

New Zealand audiences will have their first chance to see the film when it premieres at the Wellington and Auckland Film Festivals this month.

The 14-minute film tells the story of a woman who discovers something strange in her kitchen sink.

Three others

The movie was produced in association with the Short Film Fund of the New Zealand Film Commission.

Kitchen Sink will screen with three other New Zealand films at a Short Film Showcase at the Auckland Film Festival on July 22.

Much interest will centre on director Gregor Nicholas' latest film, *Rushes*, a 12-minute black comedy about obsession in which people reach absurd states in search of their unique "highs." A few years ago Nicholas

made the controversial *Drum Sing*, which won a prestigious award in the United States.

The 24-minute *Generations of Adam* introduces a new producer-director-screenwriter in Martin Percy, who retells three stories from Genesis in a fiercely primitive style.

Haka, a 40-minute feature directed by Geoff Steven and produced by Donna Awatere, portrays a dramatic meeting of old and new—the traditions of the haka, the politics of Aotearoa today and new developments in film and video technology.

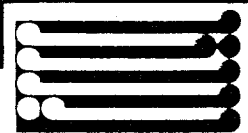
Me and Mario

The main New Zealand attraction at the film festival will be producer-director Greg Stitt's 54-minute *Just Me and Mario* on July 16.

Stitt wrote the script with Wellington playwright Michael Heath. Leon Narbey is the photographer and the original soundtrack is by Phil Broadhurst.

As in his *The Fastest Gun Downunder*, Stitt finds improbable fantasies flourishing in the Auckland suburbs. The hero of his story idolises the great popular tenor Mario Lanza.

Screening with *Just Me and Mario* is a 25-minute short entitled *O'Reilly's Luck*, produced and directed by Pat Robins, written by Tama Poata, Gaylene Preston, and Robins and photographed by Alun Bollinger. It is about a woman who has a rare talent for snooker and a strong dislike for gambling.



NEW ZEALAND FILM COMMISSION

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36 Allen Street, Wellington, New Zealand. Fax NZ (04) 849-719

Kitchen Sink brings best of both art and horror movies

THE DOMINION
20/6/89
WELLINGTON

ONE of the most dispiriting aspects of the New Zealand film industry has been its inability to grasp the nettle of genre storytelling.

With the exception of Vincent Ward, neither have we been notably successful with the more artistic, personal style of film making favoured by European directors.

Our movies still tend to get bogged down in a compromised muddle, satisfying neither as art nor entertainment.

It's reassuring then to see a picture like *Kitchen Sink*, directed by Alison Maclean.

This miniature, surrealist fable combines the best of both worlds — lofty art movie thematics with horror movie squeal and start excitement.

Canadian director David Cronenberg is no stranger to the same sort of high wire act, only his wire is a lot higher.

He's been reviled and feted in equal measure ever since his first psycho-sexual horror movie hit the screen 20 years ago.

Dead Ringers burns slower than other Cronenberg pictures, but it doesn't lack for intensity.



Costa
Botes

Any movie that can make me cross my legs so many times in 90 minutes must have something going for it.

Jeremy Irons stars as twin gynecologists going stark raving mad because they both can't have the love (Genevieve Bujold) that one craves for himself.

His performance is a triumph of technique and passion over absurdly difficult circumstances.

It's disgraceful, but not at all surprising, that great acting like this gets passed over for big awards simply because it's happening within the format of a horror movie.

More prizes for movie

WELLINGTON — Listener Film Award-winning New Zealand short film "*Kitchen Sink*" has won two awards in Australia.

Awarded the Listener award for best short film of the year, "*Kitchen Sink*" won the audience vote as the best short film at the Sydney Film Festival.

The film was also awarded a certificate of merit at the Melbourne Film Festival.

"*Kitchen Sink*", directed by Alison McLean and produced by Bridget Ikin, of Hibiscus Films, will be shown at the Wellington Film Festival which opens today.

NZPA

NZ film to compete at Cannes

WAIKATO TIMES
(HAMILTON) 11/5/89

New Zealand has a film in competition at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival.

This year, for the first time, the film which has been officially selected, is a short film — *Kitchen Sink* directed by Alison McLean and produced by Bridget Ikin for Auckland's Hibiscus Films.

Kitchen Sink is the story of a strange relationship between a woman and an unexpected arrival from the bowls of her kitchen sink. Therea Healey plays the woman.

Director McLean, will join the New Zealand delegation at Cannes for the official screenings of her film.

And another New Zealand film, *Zilch!*, directed by Richard Riddiford screens in the market at Cannes this week.

Zilch! is an action-comedy set in pre-crash Auckland. Michael Mizrahi plays a telephone operator with a penchant for listening to other people's conversations. Lucy Sheehan plays a woman with a bizarre other life.

This will be the 10th consecutive year that the New Zealand film industry has been represented at the Cannes Film Festival, and New Zealand participation is again being organised by the New Zealand Film Commission.

And the film commission is using the Cannes festival to promote numerous

other films in production and pre-production form.

The Cannes festival opens today for a 12 day celebration of film during which more than 40 movies will be screened.

A film co-produced by Woody Allen, Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese, *New York Stories* opens the festivities.

And festival president Gilles Jacob says the selection committee charged with whittling down a list of 250 competing films to 22, has actively sought new talent for the prestigious Golden Palm best film award rather than "heading for Hollywood as we might have done in the past."

But he says the Cannes tradition of playing hosts to the world's biggest film names would also be respected.

And the festival closes with the world premiere of *Old Gringo*, starring Gregory Peck and Jane Fonda, who will both be in Cannes for the showing. *New York Stories* and *Old Gringo* will not be competing for the Golden Palm award.

Jacob says no overall theme runs through the competition short-list of 22, but mysticism, sentimentality and historic themes dominated.

One of the most interesting non-competition films promises to be *Wired*, a screen version of US

journalist and author Bob Woodward's book about American film star John Belushi, who died in mysterious circumstances in 1982.

Woodward, famous for the investigative reporting that played a key role in bringing down President Richard Nixon in the Watergate scandal, has probed the life of Belushi, a talented 1970's comedian who apparently fell victim to drug abuse.

The United States and Italy, have four entries in competition while France, which has favoured status at the festival, has three.

The Soviet Union and China are both absent from this year's competition, although Hungarian, Soviet and East German directors will be screening out of competition films.

NZ HERALD (AUCKLAND) 1/3/89

entertainment

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KITCHEN SINK, the short film which won director Alison Maclean a Listener Film and Television Award last month, gets its first public screening in New Zealand this weekend.

It screens 3pm Saturday at the National Library as part of the Wellington Film Festival's Short Film Showcase. Also on the 90-minute programme are new works by Gregor Nicholas (Pushes), Geoff Steven (Haka) and Martin Percy (Generations of Adam).

Maclean says Kitchen Sink, which was in competition at Cannes this year, doesn't fit into a particular genre — rather, it's a cross between a horror story and a love story and "is quite different from the kind of film I've done before."

"It's very visual and has a nightmare quality."

The Maclean work most New Zealanders are familiar with is Talkback, which screened on television last year.

Kitchen Sink is one of the Film Commission's bonsai epics, a 12-minute short intended for theatrical release, shot on 35mm, in black and white, and with some very elaborate special effects.

Maclean is developing two new projects, one being another short film, the other her first feature.

The short, which already has funding, will be shot in Australia as a "fictionalised documentary" about a man with an obsessive compulsive disorder, while the feature is a tragi-drama about a triangular relationship.

"It's quite a dark story," says Maclean, adding the location is likely to be Rotorua. "Making a feature won't be easy. The Film Commission has done a very

FILM

By PHILIP WAKEFIELD

good thing by funding some new features.

"So at least there will be some feature filmmaking here, unlike last year."

"It will be tough, but I feel confident films will continue to be made here, with or without the Government's recognition of the industry's importance."

As for whether Kiwi filmmakers should internationalise their movies, Maclean says: "People who set out to make commercial films for the market frequently fail, anyway."

"My belief is that a film can be local and specific to a place or a culture, but because the story is so strong and you are dealing with themes that are universal, it will be of interest to a wide audience.... That's what matters, and that's what people recognise all over the world. It doesn't matter if it's set in Wellington or Berlin."

Meanwhile, competing with the festival for attention this week are five new releases — an anti-nuclear cartoon, a big-hitting baseball romance, Blake Edwards' latest comedy of the sexes, a sequel and a sequel of sorts.

When The Winds Blows, which opens at the Penthouse tomorrow, is said to be a harrowing animated feature about a rural couple coping with nuclear war. Commented one reviewer: "Dream sequences and experimental animation may be unnecessary but the film is powerful and thought-provoking."

New to the Paramount is Bull Durham, a splendid major league comedy about the "church of

baseball" which both blasphemes and worships the Yankee Doodle religion. Nonetheless, the baseball theme takes a back seat to the quirkiness of the human spirit which runs rampant through director Ron Shelton's impeccable crafted and resonant script. Kevin Costner and Susan Sarandon help to round out the best sports movie since Paul Newman's ice hockey hoot, Slapshot.

Here's hoping Skin Deep is Blake Edwards' best comedy since the exceptionally uneven filmmaker's Victor/Victoria in 1982.

The Los Angeles Times said it boasts a couple of the funniest moments Edward has ever devised (including a glow-in-the-dark sequence on safe sex) "but this tale of a rich and famous compulsive womaniser and hard drinker (John Ritter) on the skids ends up living up to its title all too closely."

It opens at the Regent and the Odeon, while the Mid City offers Cocoon II, a seemingly sure-fire sequel which despite starting the original cast bombed in the US, and See No Evil, Hear No Evil, the third starring vehicle for Richard Pryor and Gene Wilder, and the second they've made with director Arthur Hiller (Silver Streak).

It's been a big box-office disappointment in the US, but given the competition it's up against — Indiana Jones, Star Trek, Batman, Ghostbusters — that's scarcely surprising.

Nonetheless, reviews have been as lukewarm as the receipts, with one calling it a "four-mouthed, slapdash outing that follows the escapades of two handicapped men involved in the New York underworld."

On a criticism scale of 1 to 10 (poor to excellent), 40 US critics rated it a 5. □

LIFTA prediction
AKid Star 28.5.89

most memorable
t ● Short film: Kanaky Au Pouvoir,
t *Kitchen Sink*. The Lounge Bar. The
standard of the feature film section
this year ranges from the sublime to
the almost ridiculous, but the range of
d the "bonsai epic" competition is con-
sistently high. But Ali-
son MacLean's *Kitchen Sink* pips the rest with
the most gripping 15
minutes or so of cinema
I've seen in a long while.

entertainment

NZ front-runner

A 13-minute New Zealand film is odds-on favourite to win the coveted Palme d'Or (Golden Palm) Award for Best Short Film at the Cannes Film Festival.

Kitchen Sink, by Aucklanders Alison Maclean, screened with nine other short film entrants before an 800-strong audience and the Cannes festival jury, headed by German director Wim Wenders.

Against a high percentage of animated shorts, *Kitchen Sink* was the only film to draw a strong audience reaction and quickly emerged as the clear favourite.

A spot poll of 20 Cannes-goers outside the Grand Palais Theatre drew a 100 per cent response in favour of the New Zealand film. All those questioned described it both as their personal favourite, and the frontrunner to win at the awards ceremony this morning (New Zealand time).

The overall quality was felt to be down on previous years but *Kitchen Sink* was thought to be impressive. Described as a "dark and tender love story from the bowels of the plumbing system," the film was shot last year and produced by Bridget Ikin, of Hibiscus Films, Auckland.

If successful, the award would be the second time a New Zealander has picked up the short film Palme d'Or. In 1986 expatriate Kiwi Jane Campion won for her film *Peel*.

Campion, who has spent most of her working life in Australia but is now filming in New Zealand, is also thought to be on a short list for a prize this year for *Sweetie*, her debut Australian feature which was selected for the main competition.



Alison Maclean (left) and Jane Campion.

More than any other film at Cannes, *Sweetie* has polarised audiences. At its gala screening, the film was both booed and cheered by a lively audience, and it has met with a similar critical reaction.

Eminent critics such as Vincent Canby (*New York Times*), David Stratton (*Variety*) as well as reviewers in *Le Monde* and other top European publications, have praised the film for its innovative, intelligent approach. Others have questioned why it was ever selected for the prestigious competition in the first place.

Both Campion and producer John Maynard (*Vigil, The Navigator*) say they have been pleased with the response.

"We've created an antipodean *Blue Velvet*," says Maynard. "It's a challenging film. You either love it or hate it."

Meanwhile, a Japanese millionaire has descended on the New Zealand Film Commission office at Cannes demanding to finance Campion's next feature film project, "with no strings attached."

quickly snapped up, and the result is *Mystery Train*, selected for official competition this year.

Hirata, who has just seen Campion's *Sweetie*, is determined to become involved in her future projects.

"He loves her films and says she's a marvelous film-maker," says Film Commission marketing director Lindsay Shelton. "It's like a hobby for him. He has no other involvement in film. He just likes these two directors, and wants to help out. Before this I think Hirata's big passion was racehorses."

Mystery Train producer Jim Stark says the relationship between investor and movie-makers was unusually smooth because Hirata gave the money up-front with no conditions — without even knowing what film Jarmusch had in mind.

Hirata is keen not to lose contact with Campion this time.

"We're not going to let him," says Shelton.

—Jonathan Dowling

Kunigi Hirata, a senior executive with Japanese electronics giant JVC, was at the Cannes festival three years ago and was deeply impressed by two film-makers — Campion and the idiosyncratic American director Jim Jarmusch (*Stranger Than Paradise, Down By Law*).

Campion won the Palme d'Or that year for *Peel* but Hirata was unable to contact her before she left the festival.

He was more successful with Jarmusch. Hirata's offer of 100% finance was

SHORT WORTH A LOOK

Scene



Theresa Healey in Allison Maclean's *Kitchen Sink* — one for those with an eye for love/horror stories.

NZ Herald

28.05.99

Debut director's Cannes triumph

A 26-year-old American director, Stephen Soderbergh, yesterday became the sensation of the Cannes Film Festival.

Soderbergh won the festival's top prize, the Palme d'Or, for Best Film with his debut feature *Sex, Lies and Videotape*.

The film explores the emotional and physical upheavals provoked when a man's wife and mistress agree to become part of a visiting friend's personal videotape library.

The other popular favourite, Canada's *Jesus of Montreal*, directed by Denys Arcand, took the Jury Prize for special merit.

Meryl Streep was named Best Actress for her portrayal of Lindy Chamberlain in *A Cry in the Dark*, released last year in New Zealand as *Evil Angels*.

James Spader, the lead in *Sex, Lies and Videotape*, was named Best Actor.

Yugoslav director Emir



Stephen Soderbergh
... first-time winner.

Kushturica, whose previous film *When Father Was Away on Business* won the 1985 Palme d'Or, took the Best Director prize for *The Gypsy Caravan*.

A New Zealand short film widely tipped to win its section dipped out altogether.

At the short film screenings, critical and popular opinion weighed almost wholly in favour of Aucklanders Alison MacLean's *Kitchen Sink*.

Film Commission mar-

keting director Lindsay Shelton commented: "We found the judging particularly surprising because it's the only film anyone has been talking about since the screenings. It appears the Cannes jury has made one of its more perverse decisions."

Confusion about the decision spread further than the New Zealanders. The jury's choice was *50 Years*, a montage film celebrating the half-century of the Canadian National Film Board. The film wasn't among the 10 short films on the official programme. It screened instead before one of the main competition movies.

New Zealand director Jane Campion, whose Australian entrant *Sweetie* became the subject of many arguments at Cannes, was not represented in the awards.

The film, a love story with unlikely heroes, provoked extreme responses. Many felt it was a little too hot for the jury to handle this time round.

— Jonathan Dowling

SPECIAL SCREENINGS

Festival Makes a Case for Short Films

■ The 10 works should be required viewing for members of the academy who have doubts about keeping this category.

By KEVIN THOMAS
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The second annual International Festival of Short Films, composed of 10 works ranging from three to 22 minutes, should be required viewing for any member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in doubt over retaining the best short film category in the Oscars.

Selected by festival founder Jeffrey Hamblin and his colleagues Sean Reilly and Shane Peterson from a whopping 500 shorts from around the world, this year's offering is just as lively and impressive as last year's. The 110-minute program, which is presenting as a curtain-raiser Edwin S. Porter's 90-year-old "The Great Train Robbery," begins a two-week engagement Thursday at the Four Star (5112 Wilshire Blvd., between Highland and La Brea avenues) with an opening-night benefit for the American Foundation for AIDS Research. On the weekends commencing Feb. 12 and 19, the festival will be screened at Cal State Long Beach's University Theater. All 10 films will screen at each performance.

Most of the films express a view of the universe as absurd, brutal, indifferent—but usually as a darkly funny experience. Setting the tone is Norman Hull's "Out of Town" (New Zealand), in which a young man (David Morrissey) gets his foot stuck in a pipe in a field alongside a road, but his pleas for help are met with indifference and contempt. Writer Neil Clark builds and builds the man's predicament to a comically bleak finish.

Hubert Toint's "Dark Slide of the Trombone" (Belgium) imagines a state so totalitarian that it is held that only one size of photographic paper is valid. For the members of the trombone band of the tyrannical Counselor (read Big Brother), this means that there is space for only 10 of the 15 trombonists—and getting into the group shot can be a matter of life or death.



Andalusian Pictures Ltd.

Andrew Barlow stars in Jeff Balsmeyer's short film "The Room," which celebrates the power of the mind and the imagination.

The hit of the festival is Alison MacLean's gloriously outrageous "Kitchen Sink," which brings to mind David Lynch's "Eraserhead" in its creepy ingenuity and stunning black-and-white imagery. It all begins when a woman (Theresa Healey) starts pulling on an icky tendril out of the gook backing up in her kitchen sink. Instead of revealing what happens, it's better to quote MacLean's own description of her film: "It's a dark little fable about fear and desire."

The other equally original and quirky film in the festival, Grant Lahood's "Snail's Pace," also from New Zealand, charts, via knockout time-lapse photography, the progress of a snail crossing an asphalt road intent on reaching the lettuce on display outside a small market.

Jeff Balsmeyer's "The Room" (United States) celebrates the power of the mind and the imagination as a 12-year-old boy (Andrew Barlow) tries to resist his paranoid father's attempt to keep him inside a New York tenement apartment. "The Room" employs some droll and impressive special effects. Similarly, Guy Jacques' "Uhloz" (France) features two young boys and adroit special effects and has as its theme resistance to arbitrary parental authority. It takes its title from the name of a model-rocket kit that some man is handing out to every kid who wants one—and, as a toy, proves to be about as benign as the Chucky doll in the "Child's Play" movies.

Gus Van Sant's "Thanksgiving

Prayer" (United States) features William S. Burroughs reciting his poem of the same name, a mordant and witty savaging of the Norman Rockwell view of America. Framing Burroughs is a collage of archival footage alternately complimenting and counterpointing Burroughs' sentiments.

Ted Demme's "The Bet" (United States) is the longest (22 minutes) and the most traditional film in the festival, an increasingly tense study of a young man (Josh Mosby) whose compulsive gambling endangers the modest but thriving Brooklyn delicatessen he owns and operates with his straight-arrow (but not nerdy) brother (John Hickey). Demme, the nephew of director Jonathan Demme, is clearly a talent, a gifted, natural storyteller.

On a lighter note, there's Pascale Ferran's charming "This Kiss" (France) in which 17 couples, varying in age, sexual orientation and race, kiss before the camera in varying—and amusing—degrees of shyness, uninhibitedness and passion. Completing the program is an actual Oscar winner—hopefully, not an endangered species as the Academy ponders retaining the shorts category—James Hendrie's "Work Experience," a sly, funny vignette about how an unemployed but ingenious young man (Lenny Henry) inadvertently (at first) works his way into a coveted job as a department store floorwalker.

Information: (800) 925-CINE; on night of performances: Four Star: (213) 936-3533; University Theater: (310) 985-5560.