

A very nice Honeymoon



A simmonds Brothers documentation

press kit

A Very Nice Honeymoon

www.AVeryNiceHoneymoon.com

Essential Information

Writers/Directors: Jeff and Phill Simmonds

Producers: Jeff and Phill Simmonds

Executive Producer: Catherine Fitzgerald

Production Company: The Simmonds Brothers Ltd

Technical Information: 35mm, Cinemascope, Dolby SR

Running Time: 10 minutes (including titles)

Country of Production: New Zealand

Date of Completion: 2006

Sales: Kate Kennedy, NZ Film Commission (kate@nzfilm.co.nz)

Short Synopsis

A Very Nice Honeymoon is a beautifully crafted 2D and 3D animated film about Jeff and Phill Simmond's great grandparents Mariano and Elizabeth Vella who were on the steamer SS Wairarapa when it was wrecked on the coast of Great Barrier Island, New Zealand, in 1893.

Long Synopsis

Five generations tell Mariano and Elizabeth Vella's story of love, tragedy and survival. Their voices are married to cartoon likenesses. The film opens with Mariano and Elizabeth's great granddaughter and ends with Elizabeth herself describing her first-hand experience of New Zealand's third-worst maritime disaster in which approximately 131 people lost their lives.

The film also enacts the drama of the ship foundering. A Very Nice Honeymoon takes its name from an ironic remark Elizabeth makes during the film. Mariano and Elizabeth were on their honeymoon at the time of the disaster.



International Sales

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Directors' Interview

When Jeff and Phill Simmonds embarked on making *A Very Nice Honeymoon* they didn't know that separate audio recordings of their maternal great grandmother Elizabeth Vella and her daughter Metty Vella talking about the SS Wairarapa disaster existed.

They found Metty's audio in the Porirua Museum and Elizabeth's audio was discovered in the family archive. It had long been forgotten and thought of little consequence. "It was remarkable," says Jeff. "We had already received funding to make the film, and finding the audio was icing on the cake. And considering 'documation' is our stock-in-trade, we were overjoyed."

(Documation is a word invented by the brothers to describe their brand of animation. They take audio of people's real-life stories and animate them.)

In making *A Very Nice Honeymoon* the brothers wanted to explore how stories are passed down. "Every generation has a different take on their forebears," says Phill. "And even within the same generation, some people know more others. But, as they say, the past is another country. What we are really interested in is unscripted storytelling."

Phill says one of the most rewarding aspects of making *A Very Nice Honeymoon* was animating his great grandmother. "My mother did the modelling for her, because she knew Elizabeth's mannerisms," he says. "I found that very emotional. Visiting the shipwreck site in Great Barrier Island I also found emotional. It made me think of what Mariano went through. He lost his first wife and then nearly lost his second."

Mariano's first wife died not long after her fourth child was born. Mariano, originally from Dalmatia, was a sailor when he arrived in New Zealand. He went on to farm Mana Island (near Wellington) and after his first wife died, a fellow Dalmatian gave him Elizabeth's address in Dalmatia. Mariano went back to Dalmatia to woo her, and according to Phill and Jeff's mother Frances, when they meet, they fell "instantly in love".

Mariano continued to farm Mana Island after he married Elizabeth. They had four children. Elizabeth died in 1960, the year Phill was born. She was the last living survivor of the shipwreck. Phill and Jeff have dedicated *A Very Nice Honeymoon* to Mariano and Elizabeth's great grandsons, Brian Randall and Michael McClean, who passed away while the film was being made.

Directors' Biographies

Jeff and Phill Simmonds grew up in Hastings and moved to the Kapiti Coast when they were teenagers. While in Hastings the brothers experimented with stop-motion animation with a standard 8 movie camera. Jeff also made his own little movies and Phill had cartoons published in the New Zealand Listener.

The brothers went their separate ways for a few years. Phill set up his own graphic design business and Jeff worked for a short time at the National Film Unit as an assistant sound editor. He went on to gain a Ph.D in Philosophy from Victoria University.

In the mid 90's Jeff and Phill collaborated on simple web animation projects, which progressed to short hand drawn animated films. Their first short film, Pearl, Florrie and the Bull, was about elderly twins from Paekakariki who were attacked by a bull. The charming little film screened to wide acclaim at the 2004 New Zealand Film Festival. Other film projects followed, including The Wedding Speech, a short 3D film about the Tangiwai disaster (which the brothers hope to develop into a feature film) and The Paselode Story - the short but brilliant history of the former Wellington rock band Paselode.

Jeff and Phill are also talented musicians and songwriters. In 1980 they formed The Original Salt Company Jug Band, which, among other places, performed at Sweetwater's Music Festival. The band evolved into Obadiah and the Minor Prophets and it made several television appearances and played around the country for 10 years.

The title song for Pearl, Florrie and the Bull was written by Jeff and recorded by Phill's band, RhythmPlant. The score for A Very Nice Honeymoon was co-written by Wellington producer and musician Geoff Duncan and Phill and includes two of Phill's songs.

Cast And Crew

Elizabeth Vella (nee Tarabochia) was born in Dalmatia in 1872 and died in 1960. She was 22 years old when she married Mariano and outlived him by ? years. Elizabeth was a well-known character in Plimmerton (a township close to Mana Island) where she lived for 67 years. It is thought that the audio of her talking about the sinking of the Wairarapa was recorded in the early 1950s.

Metty Vella, Mariano and Elizabeth's oldest child, was born in 1895 and died in 1991. She never married and lived in the family home in Plimmerton all her life. Metty was "greatly loved" by the family.

Frances Simmonds is Jeff and Phill's mother. Her mother, Antonia, was Mariano and Elizabeth's second youngest child. Frances lives in Paraparaumu on the Kapiti Coast and has been involved in the creative arts all her life. She writes and performs humourous poetry.

John Tait, Frances' brother, lives in Auckland. He also has been involved in the arts all his life and plays the xylophone.

Jeff and Phill Simmonds (See directors' biographies)

Rachel Dodds, Mariano and Elizabeth's great great granddaughter, lives with her parents in Pukerua Bay, which is about ten miles north of Plimmerton.

Character Design – Gina Kiel

Gina is a painter and an illustrator, who has been a compulsive drawer since she was toddler. She left school last year to work full-time for the Simmonds Brothers. A Very Nice Honeymoon is her first film.

Original Score – Geoff Duncan and Phill Simmonds

Geoff collaborated with Phill on the score and recorded the music at his Wellington studio where he writes and produces music for a variety of clients. He toured through Asia as a guitarist for Hard Rock Café and Shangri La Hotels and has performed with many of New Zealand's top entertainers, such as Shona Laing, Jon Stevens, Frankie Stevens, John Rowles and Andrew Fagan.

Sound Design – Tim Prebble

Tim has been sound designer or sound editor on over 40 films. Recent films include No 2 and The World's Fastest Indian.

Voice Actors - Archie Mckeown, Dennis Green, Francesca Maroc, Ross McDermott, Corrado Ronchetu, Fr Alan Roberts

Compositing - Rodney Smith

DI Supervisor - Jon Newell

IQ Operator - Shanon Moratti

Park Road Post Liaison - Peti Nohotima

Publicist - Lindsay Rabbitt

Post Production Facility - Park Road Post

DI Colourist - David Hollingsworth

Re-recording Mixer - John Boswell

Film Out - Pete Williams - Weta Digital