

Avondale Dogs

One Sentence Statement:

Avondale, New Zealand, 1965. A young boy grapples with something bigger than he realises: the love within himself, brought into focus through his relationship with his dying mother, and this love's power of transcendence in times of loss.

Synopsis:

Paul's Mum, a music teacher in a poor suburb, is terminally ill. Sensitive to his Mum's love of music, Paul pushes her in her wheelchair as she listens to a Debussy prelude. Soon after, seeking to prove himself to some older boys, Paul shoots a pigeon belonging to the neighbouring Apirana family who we learn offers nothing but kindness.

Shocked by this incident, Paul returns to his house where he witnesses his Mum receiving a morphine injection to relieve the intensity of her suffering. He feels he mustn't leave her and he is led away against his will by Mary Apirana to play with her daughter Glenys. When Glenys shows Paul how to lick drops of fat dripping off eels hanging in her Dad's smoking shed, Paul starts to develop a crush on her.

That night, Paul dreams of seeing Glenys sitting on her horse in the street outside his house. Paul wakes and goes through to tell his ailing Mum. He works up enough courage to confess to her that he killed Glenys's pigeon, but his Mum drifts into a deep sleep before he can finish.

After school the next day, Paul steals a toy ring from the local dairy to give to his Mum. Excited, he runs home, only to find the house empty and his Mum gone. Mary Apirana takes Paul to the hospice where his Dad is waiting for him. Paul's Dad tries to comfort him as he holds his dying Mum's hand.

At his Mum's wake, Paul sees Glenys across a room full of adults and chooses this moment to give her the stolen ring. Paul and Glenys stand hand in hand, profoundly affected by a waiata lament sung by Mary Apirana for Paul's Mum.

GREGOR NICHOLAS - DIRECTOR

Described in a May 1996 issue of The Hollywood Reporter as "one of New Zealand's newest and hottest directors" Nicholas has won over twenty international awards for his short films. After studying architecture and art history, Nicholas made several experimental films and documentaries before embarking on a successful career directing commercials.

His short film *Avondale Dogs* highlighted his ability to elicit inspired and delicately nuanced performances from his cast. The film's poignant evocation of 1960's New Zealand life received acclaim worldwide.

His feature film *Broken English* is a cross-cultural love story set in Auckland's migrant community.

He is currently developing a project in the United States with Barbara De Fina called *Mississippi Mud* to be executive produced by Martin Scorsese.

FILMOGRAPHY

1993 *Pacific 3-2-1-Zero* - music performance/film collaboration

Croisette d'Or Grand Prix - Cannes Music Film Awards
Competition Finalist - Banff Festival

1994 *Avondale Dogs* - short drama

Silver Bear, Best Fiction Film - 36th Bilbao International
Documentary and Short Film Festival
Kino Award, Best Short Fiction Film - 43rd Melbourne
International Film Festival
Official Selection - 51st Venice International Film Festival
Grand Prix, Best Short Film - Filmfest Dresden
CINAR Grand Prix, Radio Canada Grand Prix - 3rd Montreal
International Short Film Festival

1994 Avondale Dogs - (cont'd)

Interfilm Award; Catholic Jury Award - 43rd Mannheim
Heidelberg International Film Festival
Silver Hugo, Best Short Drama Film - 30th Chicago
International Film Festival
BBC Award, Best Drama - British Short Film Festival
Best Short Film - New Zealand Film and Television Awards
Technical Excellence Award - Canterbury Short Film Festival
Competition Finalist - Clermont Ferrand Short Film Festival
Telluride Film Festival
Sundance Film Festival

"Beautifully observed, achingly sad." - Daily Telegraph, London

"Stunningly poignant ... a truly visionary perspective of life
and death." - Le Devoir, Montreal

"Masterful performances." - Chicago Sun Times

"Brilliant." - The Weekend Review, Australia

"Ravishing." - Dominion, Wellington

"Brilliantly evokes time and place in sensuous and often
startling images." - Pavement Magazine, Auckland

"Remarkable for its sensitivity and the quality of its
cinematographic language." - Jury, Montreal Short Film Festival

1996 Broken English - feature film

Toronto International Film Festival

G r e g o r

Nicholas

Avondale Dogs*

(15 minutes, 35mm, 1994)

Director's statement

I'm always on the look-out for the extraordinary in the everyday and I love it when movies capture the strange and vivid mystery that can be found in life's smallest details—like Jake gazing at Vicky's legs swinging in the pool in *Raging Bull*.

I miss compassion in the movies and try to build it into my own work. Compassion is not very '90s but it always packs a powerful emotional punch for me whenever I see it on the big screen.

Influences: the lyrical compassion and humanity of Ingmar Bergman's and Bille August's *Best Intentions*; the cinematic bravura, documentary realism, and ethnographic authenticity of Scorsese's *Goodfellas*; and the narrative rigor of Coppola's *The Godfather*.

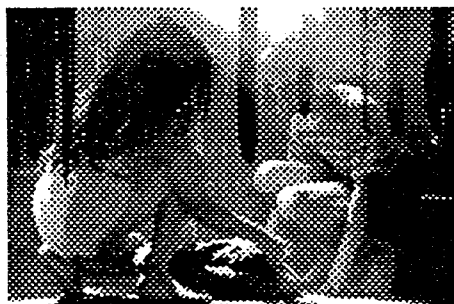
Short biography:

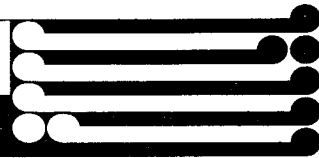
Award-winning director Gregor

Nicholas studied architecture and art history but eventually segued into film, making short experimental and documentary films in the early '80s. This year Nicholas won the Croisette d'Or Grand Prix at the Cannes MIDEM Awards. He now directs commercials, which have taught him a great deal about "full-on, rapid montage sensory assaults." In addition to the recently completed *Avondale Dogs*, Nicholas has just finished an original full-length screenplay, *Broken English*.

My dream movie would have all these attributes, but I'd settle for two or three...

* Kino Award for Best Short Drama, Melbourne International Film Festival; Official Selection, Venice Film Festival





Festivals
AVONDALE DOGS

1994

Melbourne, Australia
Auckland IFF
Wellington IFF
New Look Aotearoa, Hollywood
Venice, Italy
Telluride, USA

Kino Award, Best Drama

Gregor Nicholas attended
Gregor Nicholas attended
Chosen to open the festival
Gregor Nicholas attended

Mill Valley Film Festival, USA
Mannheim Heidelberg, Germany
Chicago, USA
Milan NZ Festival
Olympia, USA
Montreal World Film Festival
Bilbao, Spain

Awarded two Special Mentions
Silver Hugo, short drama

Silver Medal, Fiction

1995

Sundance, USA
Goteborg, Sweden
San Diego Film Festival, USA
Sydney Outdoor FF
Clermont-Ferrand, France
Santa Barbara, USA
Philadelphia, USA
Montreal SFF, Canada
Oberhausen SFF, Germany
Filmfest Dresden
Bela Horizonte, Brazil
Maryland, USA
Anzac FF, The Netherlands
Canterbury SFF
Greece SFF
Helsinki Film Festival
British Short Film Festival

Gregor Nicholas attended

In Competition

Grand Prize

First Prize

In Competition

1995 NZ Film and TV Awards

Best Short Film

CURRICULUM VITAE

Stephanie M. Bauer
1/205 Ponsonby Road, Auckland
09 376 4134

- Date of Birth:** 1 June 1958 Chicago, Illinois
Dual Citizenship USA/New Zealand
- Education:** **LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO**
Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Arts
and Graphic Design
RICHMOND COLLEGE, LONDON
Studied Philosophy/Comparative Religion/
Documentary Films
GOETHE INSTITUTE, WEST GERMANY
Studied German Language/Culture
- Work Experience:** 1983 to 1993
- 1983-1986**
Los Angeles **CUNNINGHAM & WALSH ADVERTISING**
Television Commercial Producer
- 1986-1987**
Los Angeles **Freelance Commercial Producer**
I worked for the following companies on TV
commercials and music videos:
HARMONY PICTURES/ROBERT ABEL/
SUNLIGHT PICTURES/STARTURN
PICTURES/ELLIOTT & GREEN PROD.
NY/BELL ONE PROD. NY/BROADCAST ARTS
NY/GREY ADVERTISING
- Writer**
RYTHM & BLUES MAGAZINE
- Graphic Designer**
MEDIA GRAFX, LA
- Art Director/Writer**
REGGAE TIMES MAGAZINE, LA
- Coordinator/Developer GIFT OF A LIFE**
FOUNDATION, new non-profit
organization specializing in human organ
donation.

<p>1987-1988 New Zealand</p>	<p>Moved to New Zealand Commercial Producer YOUNG & RUBICAM ADVERTISING</p>
<p>1988-1990</p>	<p>Producer FLYING FISH, LEE TAMAHORI DIRECTOR</p>
<p>1990-1991</p>	<p>Freelance Producer/Writer CHIAT DAY MOJO ADVERTISING THIS IS IT, GREGOR NICHOLAS DIRECTOR</p>
	<p>Wrote two short films, "Best Friends" and "Crazy" in development</p>
	<p>Business trip LA, CHICAGO, LONDON, BERLIN Promoted commercial film production in New Zealand and film script development with associates in Chicago, LA and London</p>
<p>1991-1993</p>	<p>Head of Television Production SAATCHI & SAATCHI ADVERTISING, AUCKLAND</p>
<p>1993 June-September</p>	<p>Left Saatchi & Saatchi to work on Writing and Directing my film ideas.</p>
	<p>Business trip to LA, CHICAGO, LONDON Used the time to write, promote commercial film production in NZ, develop my scripts with associates in LA and London</p>
	<p>Received New Zealand Citizenship</p>
<p>October, ongoing</p>	<p>Producer THIS IS IT, GREGOR NICHOLAS</p>

END CREDITS

CARD 1

Paul	DAMIEN LAY
Paul's Mum	RHONDDA FINDLETON
Glenys	MELINNI BLAKE
Paul's Dad	STEPHEN HALL
Mary	GLYNNIS PARAHA

Card 2

Writer/Director
GREGOR NICHOLAS

Card 3

Producer	STEPHANIE BAUER
Executive Producer	DORTHE SCHEFFMANN
Co-Writer	JIM WILKINS

Card 4

Director of Photography	IAN PAUL
Production Designer	MIKE KANE
Editor	DAVID COULSON
Casting	FIONA EDGAR JULIETTE MONAGHAN
Line Producer	MARGARET SLATER
Sound Designer/Mixer	JOHN MCKAY

Card 5

Ist Assistant Director	EARL JONES
Costume Designer	GLENIS FOSTER
...	...
Continuity	MELISSA WIKAIRE
Sound	DAVE HURLEY
Grip	...
Gaffer	RICHARD EVANS
Props Buyer	...
Set Dresser	BRAD MILL
Camera Assistant	PAUL LAKE
Clapper Loader	SHARON HAWKE
Boom Operator	...
Grip/Lighting Assistant	...
Best Boys	...
.... Trainee	...
...	...
Animal Wrangler	...
Assistant Wrangler	...
Construction	...
...	...
.../	
2nd Assistant Director	...
Production Assistant	...
Production Secretary	...
Production Assistant/...	...
Assistant Editor	ANDREA TOWERS
Script Assessor	ANNE KENNEDY
...	...
...	...
Hair Stylist	...
Makeup Assistant	...

Card 6

Card 6

Location Scout	...
...	WAYNE LAIRD
Additional Photography	... LEON NARBAY
Camera Assistants	JUSTIN TOPZAND SHARON HAWKE
Grip	ANNIE FREAR
Tracking Trainee	...
Gaffer	TONY EVERSDON
Props	...
...	...
Sound Effects Editor	...
Laboratory Manager	GARY LORD
Laboratory Liaison	GRANT CAMPBELL
Negative Matcher	JULIAN SCOTT
Opticals	...
...	...
Rostrum Camera	...
Tape Grader	...
Tape Editor	...
Titles Designer	...
Production Accountant	AVRIL STOTT
Nurse	...
Caterer	WILD LUNCH
Production Trainees
Camera Trainee	...
Lighting Trainee	...
...	...
Stills Photographer	PATRICK REYNOLDS

Card 7

Brett ...
Greg ...
Waiata Singer ...
... GEOFF SNELL
...
...
Minister ...
...
...
...
...
Extras SHOW-OFF

"....."
by CLAUDE DEBUSSY
Performed by ...

"E PA TO HOA"
Waiata Tangi - ...
Performed by GLYNNIS PARAHA
and HINE ...

CARD 8

Camera and Lenses by ...
Laboratory THE FILM UNIT
Editing Facility THE FILM HOUSE
Film Supplier KODAK (NZ) LTD
Video Post-Production DIGITAL POST
Audio Post-Production SOUNDWORKS

THE PRODUCERS WOULD LIKE TO THANK:

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Card 9

In Loving Memory of
MARIE NICHOLAS 1934 - 1992

THIS IS IT
in association with
THE SHORT FILM FUND OF THE NEW ZEALAND FILM COMMISSION

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AVONDALE DOGS

Damien Lay
'Paul'

Damien Lay is a ten year old boy living in Auckland with his mother Sue. "Avondale Dogs" is Damien's first dramatic film role. His other acting work consists of a minor role in 'Shortland Street' (a New Zealand TV soap), television commercials and school plays. As a performer he is very intelligent and sensitive. At times he seems far more mature than his ten years.

Damien brings a very special quality to the role of Paul in "Avondale Dogs". He takes us into his heart as we live the experiences he feels ... his deep love for his mother, the boyish antics of shooting pigeons, and the emotional intrigue he feels for the beautiful and tomboyish Glenys. And then he goes one step further and takes us into that complex area of a child's emotions, in his attempts to right a wrong and the profound events that take place in his journey to understanding.

AVONDALE DOGS

**Rhondda Findleton
Paul's Mother**

Rhondda Findleton is a New Zealander and a well established actor. She presently lives in Auckland, New Zealand. Rhondda established her acting career in Australia at the Sydney Acting School and Corporeal Mime School. Before her return to Auckland she lived and worked in Sydney for over twelve years. She appeared in a number of feature films, made for TV films, soaps, theatrical plays and commercials.

As Paul's dying mother, Rhondda must depict her illness realistically and yet try to protect Paul from the pain she is going through, both emotionally and physically. The scenes that show Rhondda with her son reveal that she has captured the emotional bond that exists between mother and child, and the imminent loss that they both face. Which is often simply revealed in her eyes or the touch of her hand. A profound performance that is an integral part of this powerful film.

PRODUCER PROFILE

Stephanie Bauer

United States born Stephanie Bauer is an accomplished producer who combines an intuitive understanding of the director's needs with a creative eye and strong organizational skills.

Stephanie was a television commercial producer in Los Angeles for four years. On a visit to New Zealand in 1987 she was impressed with the creative freedom and quality of filmmaking here and sought permanent residency. Now a dual citizen with U.S. and N.Z. passports she enjoys the opportunities she has in New Zealand and also travelling to America and Europe where she keeps in touch with her international contacts in the film and commercial industries.

Stephanie has a degree in Communication Arts and Graphic Design from Loyola University of Chicago, and she has studied in London and West Germany. She moved to Los Angeles to break into the film industry, and worked as a producer on television commercials and music videos. Stephanie is also an experienced writer. Outside of personal writing projects she wrote and art directed for music magazines Rythm and Blues and Reggae Times in LA.

On her arrival in New Zealand, Stephanie joined Young & Rubicam Advertising and later produced for Lee Tamahori at Flying Fish. Between 1991-93 she was head of television production at Saatchi & Saatchi in Auckland. Many of the commercials she produced have gone on to win national and international awards.

Stephanie teamed up with Gregor Nicholas in 1993. Together they have done a number of television commercials and the 15 minute film "Avondale Dogs". She is currently working on several short stories, poetry and developing a feature script and two short film scripts.

Nicholas provides latest success

By DEBORAH TELFORD

GREGOR Nicholas' short film *Avondale Dogs* is proving to be the latest big New Zealand hit on the international film circuit despite being denied an opportunity to screen at Cannes earlier this year.

The 15-minute film last week scooped the Kino Award For Best Fiction Film at the Melbourne International Film Festival, competing against 370 other entries from all over the world. The award is for one of four categories at Melbourne, one of the few international festivals which runs competitions for short films.

Avondale Dogs has also been invited to screen in September at the Lido in Venice for that city's 51st international festival, the cultural equal of Cannes but less of a market place. It is the first short New Zealand film to be invited to Venice, which four years ago showered Jane Campion's *An Angel At My Table* with accolades including the prestigious Special Jury Prize.

Mr Nicholas' effort will also show at a special invitation-only screening of short New Zealand films this week for the film making community in Los Angeles, a hand picked group including film agents and directors.

Kathleen Drumm, marketing manager for the New Zealand

Film Commission, says the success of *Avondale Dogs* is continued proof that the international film world is finally giving due recognition to the talent coming out of New Zealand.

"Perhaps after *The Piano* they are taking a more careful look at what we have to offer," says Ms Drumm. "New Zealand films are not just doing well, they are doing exceptionally well."

Made on a New Zealand Film Commission budget of \$120,000, the film is the story of a young boy growing up in 1960s Avondale who grapples emotionally to come to terms with his mother's pain and eventual death from cancer.

The film is overlaid with the conflicting emotions the boy, Paul, feels as he seeks to prove himself to some older boys by shooting a pigeon.

Newcomer Damien Lay gives an poignant performance as Paul and his mother is played by actress Rhondda Findleton from the Anchor butter advertisements.

Mr Nicholas says the story sprang from the intense emotions that he experienced during the last weeks of his own mother's life before she died from cancer last year.

"We were very close and I wanted to capture that intensity of feeling but set it in the past through the eyes of a young boy. I was trying to touch on the power of



PAUL (Damien Lay) and mother (Rhondda Findleton) in *Avondale Dogs*

love in a way that it (the film) would also touch the people who watch it."

The film is also biographical in the sense that it is set in Avondale where Mr Nicholas spent his childhood. Part of its beauty is that on a limited budget and with only 15 minutes to play with, its images of a 1960s semi-rural suburb are totally convincing without becoming laboured.

"One common reaction is that it propels people, particularly in their 30s and 40s, back to their own childhood. It seems to have struck a chord there," says Mr Nicholas, whose last short film *Pacific 3,2,1,Zero* won the Croisette d'Or Grand Prix at this year's Cannes Midem Awards.

Recently he won the best editor award at the New Zealand Film and Television Awards for *Pacific 3,2,1,Zero*, which depicts Auckland group From Scratch performing their nuclear protest work.

Mr Nicholas says *Avondale Dogs* may have been overlooked by the French selectors for Cannes but chosen for Venice because its style was a mixture of poetic elements and documentary truth similar to the neo-realism that the Italians developed following the war.