

O TAMAITI

(The Children)

PRESS BOOK

Director: Sima Urale
Producer: Kara Paewai

Duration: 15 minutes
Ratio: 1:1.66
Sound: Dolby Stereo

O TAMAITI

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One-line Synopsis

A young boy plays guardian and protector to his siblings, but even all his efforts cannot prevent the death of the new baby.

Synopsis

Seen through the eyes of 11 year old Tino, the eldest of five children in a Samoan family the film opens with the birth of yet another baby, and Tino must cope with the added pressures and responsibilities expected of him as the eldest.

With Mother and Father figures who are heard but not seen, they struggle with mundane jobs, changing social values, and financial pressures in a new country.

Tino must carry the weight of responsibilities, tending to the needs of his younger siblings and newborn baby with adult maturity. But even all his efforts cannot prevent the tragic cot death of his baby brother.

O TAMAITI portrays the impressions of a young boy in a powerless adult dominated world.

Director's Notes

Inspired by my own experiences as a child growing up surrounded by relatives struggling with both Samoan and Western cultures, **O Tamaiti**, is about the unconditional bond among children in Pacific Island families.

The story is seen through the eyes of the children. From their perspective, we experience their deepest fears and anxieties, of children who are seen but not heard. Their impressions of an adult world, where cars zoom dangerously by, Father booms with an almighty voice, and the parent's lovemaking becomes a demented nightmare for the eldest boy, Tino.

In Samoan society, children often assume adult roles of "caregiver" or "mother and father" to younger brothers and sisters. The core of this film is about a young Samoan boy, the effects of the burdens and responsibilities he must carry as the eldest in the family.

The narrative places this film in the "drama/tragedy" genre. It begins with the birth of a baby, to its tragic cot death. The overall stylistic approach to the film also takes it into elements of surrealism.

I hope that the treatment of this story in the way of characters, visuals and sound, will be a refreshing and new approach to Polynesian content in film.

My intentions for shooting *Black and White* was to shed the stereotypical images of Pacific Islanders as a kitch culture with colourful paraphernalia, too often depicted in contemporary films today.

Sima Urale - Writer/Director

Born in the village of Fagamalo, Western Samoa, my family immigrated to New Zealand when I was six.

I attended the New Zealand Drama School (Toi Whakaari O Aotearoa) in 1987, where I discovered my love for directing as well as acting. After graduating in 1989, I performed in various theatres throughout New Zealand, such as Downstage, Circa and Fortune.

The need to broaden my horizons and create my own work led me to the Victorian College of the Arts, Film and Television School in Melbourne, Australia. My 3rd year major production, *Burning Moths*, won Best VCA Sound Award. It screened at the prestigious Sydney Film Festival 1995 as well as in Festivals throughout Australia.

After graduating with a B.A (Film & TV) in 1994, I returned to New Zealand and am currently working on writing new film scripts as well as working as an actor.

In 1995 I returned to the theatre to act in the award-winning production of ***Think of a Garden***, written by John Kneubul, and directed by Nathaniel Lees at Taki Rua Theatre, Wellington. My role in ***Think of a Garden*** won me The Wellington Chapman Tripp Theatre Award - Best Actress in a Supporting Role. The play also received awards for the Best Director, Best Set Design and Best Production of the Year.

I have just finished writing and directing a Positive Parenting corporate video for the Childrens and Young Persons Service, produced by the Legal Resources Trust.

FILMOGRAPHY

SIMA URALE

- 1996** **POSITIVE PARENTING** **Writer/Director**
Doco video, 30 mins.
For Legal Resources Trust and
The Childrens and Young Persons
Services. Producer Brent Williams.
- O TAMAITI (The Children)** **Writer/Director**
35mm, Black and White, 15mins.
Producer Carol J Paewai (Kara)
- 1995** **HIBISCUS MILK** **1st Assistant Director**
Music video.
- SWIMMING LESSONS** **Chaperone and Actor Coach**
16mm, 1hr Drama for **for six year old Samoan actor.**
Sunday Montana Series.
Director Steve La Hood.
Producer Jan Haynes
- INTERDIGITATE '95** **Collaborative Producer and**
Monitor wall visuals and live **Director with Makerita Urale.**
performance.
6 mins at the Herald Theatre,
Aotea Centre, Auckland.
- 1994** Graduated Bachelor of Arts (BA) from the Victorian College of the Arts Film and
Television School, Melbourne, Australia. (formerly Swinburne.)
- 1994** **BURNING MOTHS** **Writer/Director/Editor/**
16mm drama, colour, 15mins **Sound Design.**
3rd Year Major Production.
- Won VCA Best Sound Award 1994.
Picked up by Australian AFI Distribution Ltd.
Screened at the Sydney Film Festival July 1995.
Part of the VCA 'Ultra Shorts' package and
screened around Australia.
- 1993** **TATTOO** **Writer/Director/Editor/**
16mm drama, colour, 8mins **Sound Design.**
2nd Year Major Production.
- 1992** **THE WAY OF MARY** **Writer/Director/Editor/**
video, black and white, 12mins **Sound Design.**
1st Year Major Production.

The three year course is 80% hands-on, providing training on all aspects of filmmaking. Students are required to crew on each others films such as 1st Assistant, Boom, Cinematography, Sound Design, Editing etc. Script writing, History of Cinema, Directing classes and Production management are also part of the curriculum.

Carol J. Paewai (Kara) - Producer

After graduating with a Bachelor of Business Studies degree (BBS) majoring in Accounting and Finance from Massey University 1986, I did further study in Maori Resource Management at Victoria University of Wellington. I was fortunate to be able to study under the two leading experts in this area, Professor Winiata and Hemi Toia. This interest continues today and can be seen in my work in the film and television industries and my involvement in Maori filmmaking and broadcasting.

Prior to working in film and television I worked in theatre, beginning in production and publicity and marketing for Maori theatre groups and then as the Administrator of Taki Rua Theatre. The marketing and publicity aspects of film are areas I am keen to become involved in.

In 1990 I formed Nga Kara Whetu Productions together with Christina Ngahuaia Asher and Whetu Fala. It was Maori women telling Maori stories. We produced 3 x 1/2hr documentaries in partnership with Top Shelf Productions as part of a 13 part indigenous series, **FROM SPIRIT TO SPIRIT** involving the Sami, Aborigine, Inuit and Maori. We also wrote, directed and produced a short film **MOKOPUNA**. Although no longer working together as Nga Kara Whetu Productions both Christina and Whetu worked on **O TAMAITI** as Production Manager and Continuity Trainee respectively.

Drama productions I have worked on include the feature films **CHICKEN** (Production Accountant), **THE FLIGHT OF THE ALBATROSS** (NZ Production Accountant), **ONCE WERE WARRIORS** (Production Co-ordinator) and **TE RUA** (Production Co-ordinator), and as Production Manager on **THE VISITATION** (television drama) and **KIMI AND THE WATERMELON** (short film).

I continue to work freelance in the film and television industries as a Production Manager, Production Accountant or Producer as well as working on my own projects with directors and writers.

Key Cast

Tino - Harry Wendt
Tala - Therese Fatu
Pita - Charles Faamausili

O Tamaiti has a cast of six children ranging from as young as the four month old baby Renee to the lead boy Tino, played by 11 year old Harry Wendt. All six children were selected from over 100 Pacific Island children who auditioned. None of them had any previous acting experience but proved to possess a maturity and a discipline on set that impressed the crew and myself.

As a Director/Actor who has only ever worked with professional adult actors, the thought of directing children was at first daunting and challenging. However, over the demanding six day shoot, the three eldest, Harry Wendt (11), Therese Fatu (8) and Charles Fa'amausili (6), showed mature commitment and endurance that is reflected on screen.

The presence of these children on set made filming an enjoyable and memorable experience for all involved.

Rewa Harre - Director of Photography

My involvement in film making started when I was about five years old, and has been a passion ever since. Storytelling through images of light, shadow, colour, shapes, textures and movement. These things are what really inspire me when I am involved with a film project. I believe a lot of "me" is what I experience through my eyes. What I see around me everyday has an influence on my "film making". Sometimes I think that if we as human beings could see and not speak we would have few problems communicating!

Over the past few years I have been involved in such projects as; 2nd Unit Cameraman on the feature film ***The Piano***, DOP on a one hour television drama ***Kahu and Maia***, Camera Operator with main unit on the television drama series ***Mysterious Island***, DOP on a one hour television drama ***The Call Up***, DOP on the theatrical short ***Mananui***, and DOP on the theatrical short ***Planet Man***.

O TAMAITI

(The Children)

Writer/Director	Sima Urale
Producer	Carol J. Paewai
Director of Photography	Rewa Harré
Editor	Annie Collins
Sound Design	Ray Beentjes

CAST

Tino	Harry Wendt
Tala	Therese Fatu
Pita	Charles Faamausili
Manaia	Tom Andrews
Julio	Julio Meli

Paewai Productions presents a film by Sima Urale in association with the Short Film Fund of the New Zealand Film Commission.

Length	15 minutes
Format	35mm, Black & White Dolby Stereo
Screen Ratio:	1:1.66

Sales Contact:
New Zealand Film Commission
PO Box 11 546
Wellington, New Zealand
Tel 64 4 385 9754
Fax 64 4 384 9719

O Tamaiti

Festivals and Awards

1996

Sydney Film Festival, June 7 - 22

Venice Film festival, August 28 - September 7
Giovani Leoni (Best Short Film)

NZ Film Awards
Best Short Film

Telluride Film Festival, August 30 - September 2

Mill Valley Film Festival, October 3 - 13

London Film Festival, November 7 - 14

1997

Sundance Film Festival, January 16 - 26