

KEIRFILM
in association with the
New Zealand Film Commission

present

LEMMING AID
ASSISTANCE AUX LEMMINGS

directed by Grant La Hood

Official Selection
In Competition
Cannes 1994

Sales:
Kathleen Drumm
New Zealand Film Commission
2nd floor
Residence Festival
52 La Croisette
Tel 9338 3560

Press:
Rachel Stace

SYNOPSIS

"Lemming Aid" is a wry comedy about Human nature colliding with Mother Nature...
....Literally!

A party of New Zealand animal rights activists assemble on a Norwegian cliff top to prevent the annual mass suicide of Lemmings.

All is fine until their vigil is interrupted by a Norwegian woman intent on using the Lemmings as the furry opponents in a crude form of blood sport.

This is the story of their encounter.....

THE STORY

Six over zealous Kiwi animal rights activists have travelled to Norway on a misguided mission: to stop a crazed horde of Lemmings from leaping into oblivion.

Armed only with good intentions and soft puffy pillows, they form a human wall on the edge of a clifftop - high above the crashing seas below.

Their vigil is interrupted by a Norwegian woman who, it gradually becomes apparent, has come to pit herself against the marauding rodents in a bizarre form of blood sport.

As the Lemmings get closer, the group slowly realise what the woman is doing there, and tempers rise, escalating to physical violence.

By the end of the day, more than the Lemmings have death on their minds...

CREW LIST

Director	Grant Lahood
Producer	John Keir
Director of Photography	Simon Riera
Art Director	John Girdlestone
First Assistant Director	Jonathon Brough
Production Manager	Meryl Emmerton
Production Assistants	Stephanie Tims
	Jasmin McSweeney
Production Accountant	Ann Bould
Focus Puller	Harry Slowey
Clapper Loader	Nick Hutchinson
Sound Recordist	Ken Saville
Boom Operator	Chris Hiles
Gaffer	Rob Kerr
Grip	Murray Love
Best Boys	Dan Cleary
	Anthony Farrell
Props	Bridey Farrell
	Sven Bieringa
Wardrobe	Chris Elliot
Wardrobe Assistant	Nicola Clegg
Makeup	Sonja Hall
Music	Michelle Scullion
Musicians	You Lee
	Rhiannon Thomas
	Vadim Oussov
Sound Mixer	Simon Hughes
Engineer	Nigel Stone
Tracklay	Simon Hughes
	Grant Taylor
Casting	Cushla Roughton
Still Photographs	Annie Vanderpoel
	John Girdlestone
Caterer	Harriet Harcourt

CAST

- Raewyn **FIONA SAMUEL**
Well known Wellington writer ("Marching Girls") and actress on stage and screen ("Stroke").
- Jack **JED BROPHY**
Film credits include "AWOL", "Brain Dead", and "Once Upon Chunuk Bair". Television includes "Undercover" and "Shark in the Park".
- Eileen **EMILY PERKINS**
Starred in the 1993 short film "White Gloves and Greensleeves" and wide experience in theatre and television.
- Malcolm **MICK ROSE**
Appeared most recently in Gaylene Preston's acclaimed "Bread and Roses", and extensive acting credits in theatre and television.
- Clare **CARMEL McGLONE**
Lead actor in "Send a Gorilla" and broad theatre and television including "Marching Girls" and "Seekers".
- Steve **STEPHEN PAPPS**
Best known for his award winning performance as Firpo in "The End of the Golden Weather", as well as roles in films ranging from "The Piano" to "Braindead".
- Norwegian **KATIE WOLFE**
Most recent film credits include "Taking Liberties" and the short film "Making Money". Well known star of television's "Marlin Bay".

GRANT PETER LAHOOD

Born May 1962 in Inglewood, Taranaki.

Joined film industry in 1983 as a production assistant for a video company.

Trained as a lighting cameraman - shooting commercials, corporate videos and television for the next seven years.

Directing commercials and short films since 1989.

Currently developing script for first feature film "The Chicken Man".

FILMOGRAPHY

"SNAIL'S PACE" (1989)

Wrote, produced and directed this four minute timelapse short film, about a common garden snail's high speed mission to cross the road for a lettuce salad.

- Sold to television in New Zealand, Australia and several European channels.
- Cinema releases in New Zealand and Spain, United States.
- Film festivals - Wellington, Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Sydney (Australia), Oporto (Portugal), Wine Country (California), and Vancouver (Canada).

"THE END" (1990)

Wrote, produced and directed this nine minute black comedy about an unusual day in the life of a gravedigger.

- Sold to television in New Zealand, France, Germany, Sweden and Finland.
- Film Festivals - Wellington, Auckland and Canterbury.

"THE SINGING TROPHY" (1992)

Wrote and directed this Bonsai epic (13 minute theatrical short).

A comedy about a hunter/taxidermist whose bizarre collection of mounted animal trophies sing to him, Strauss' "The Blue Danube".

- Selected for Official Competition 1993 Festival du Film, Cannes (received special Jury Mention for Technical Excellence).
- Winner of the Best Short Film at the NZ Film and Television awards 1993.
- Grand prize nominee at 1993 Kobe International Film Festival (Japan)
- Voted runner up best short film at the 1993 Sydney Film Festival.
- Other film festivals - Wellington, Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Canterbury, Sydney, Melbourne (Australia), Telluride, Sitges (Spain), Sao Paulo (Brazil), Stockholm, Fantasporto (Portugal), Comedy Vevey (France), Ismalia (Egypt), Vancouver, HOF (Germany).

LEMMING AID - DIRECTOR'S NOTES

This film continues my current pre-occupation with animals and their relationship with humans.

I started thinking about the contradictions in some people's beliefs - championing the protection of certain animals species while having no qualms about seeing others killed because they are perceived to be "pests".

Obviously this usually depends on how endangered a particular species is, but I think there's also a certain "fluffy factor" which makes it easier for people to respond to the plight of an endangered animal if it happens to look cute (i.e. mink, baby seals, dolphins).

I became interested in the unassuming Lemming - a small furry rodent that has gained international notoriety by imitating the very human behaviour of willingly taking their own lives.

My imagination was captured by this suicidal tendency and I investigated the truth a little further - do Lemmings really throw themselves into the sea?

The plot thickened when I heard the story of the wildlife documentary team who allegedly staged a mass suicide, throwing the unfortunate rodents off a cliff for the benefit of the camera.

I'm pleased to say we didn't have to recreate the scene for this film.....

The Lemming situation provided a great setting for a parody of a group of animal rights activists who take themselves far too seriously, directing their rampant environmentally correct sentiments at a completely impossible goal. This naive group's enthusiasm for saving animals is outdone only by the absurdity of their current mission.

When the group faces an antagonist whose goals are in direct conflict with their own, it challenges their beliefs and tests their commitment to non violence ...

... And when the group's leader turns out to be more aggressive than the supposed aggressor, it raises the question - what is more important to the group, the lives of many animals or the life of one human?

The film is an absurd comedy - presenting a ridiculous situation in a very straight way, with everyone on screen taking the whole thing very seriously.

I was keen to create a group of distinctly different, rather unusual characters and watch how they react when placed under stress.

I would hope that the audience initially wonders whether or not they are watching a comedy, but as the story progresses, and it becomes obvious they are, the situation becomes even funnier.

THE PRODUCER

John Keir has a background in television current affairs and documentary making.

His documentaries include "Flight 901: The Erebus Disaster" (the inquiry into the causes of the Air New Zealand crash in Antarctica), "The Aphrodisiac Trail" (an investigation into the Asian trade in deer antler) and, last year, "Hillary: From Everest" (produced to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the ascent of Mount Everest).

During the last two years, he has produced four cinema shorts - "I'm in Here" directed by Danny Mulheron; "Bradman" by Peter Tait; and "The Singing Trophy" and "Lemming Aid" both written and directed by Grant Lahood.

John Keir is currently working on a number of feature film projects.

PRODUCER'S NOTES

"Lemming Aid" marks a significant advance in Grant Lahood's career.

In the past, with films like "Snail's Pace" and "The Singing Trophy", he demonstrated a unique ability to come up with interesting and quirky ideas. With his latest film he proved himself also to be a director with the skills to work with an ensemble cast and get the very best from his actors.

"Lemming Aid" contains some fine acting performances delivered in terrible physical conditions by some of New Zealand best young actors.

Filming took place over three 14-hour days on a cliff top at Titahi Bay, just north of Wellington. The wind was gale force and relentless. Despite these conditions, Grant and his cast and crew were able to deliver their best.

And it shows on screen.

I think "Lemming Aid" is further proof of New Zealand's ability to produce world class directors. Films like "The Piano" don't come out of nowhere. They come from people identified as having the vision and the film making skills; but mostly they come from people being given the chance to practice their craft.

Lemming Aid

1994

Cannes Film Festival

Jury Prize

Auckland Int. FF

Wellington Int. FF

New Look Aotearoa

Melbourne IFF

Sydney IFF

Brisbane IFF

Fringe Festival

Umea FF, Sweden

Flanders IFF

Aspen, USA

London IFF

Taipei Golden Horse IFF

Mill Valley IFF

IFF de Comedy, Vevey, Switz.

Olympia, USA

Hof Film Festival, Germany

1995

Dublin, Ireland

Larissa, Greece

Dip. of Honour

Montreal Short FF

In competition

Hamburg Short FF

New Directors, New York

Canterbury Short FF

Sao Paulo, Brazil

Vancouver Film Festival

1996

Arcipelago Film Festival, Rome

PRESS RELEASE

"LEMMING LUNACY FROM AWARD WINNING DIRECTOR"

Suicidal lemmings star in a new film by Grant Lahood, *Lemming Aid*.

Set on a Norwegian clifftop, the film starts with a group of Kiwi activists preparing to take a stand. Their misguided mission : to stop a crazed horde of determined lemmings from taking their annual suicide jump. But how successful can six small activists hope to be against a mass of leaping lemmings obsessively pursuing their fate!

"It provided a great setting for a parody of animal rights activists who take themselves far too seriously, directing their rampant environmentally correct sentiments at a completely impossible goal" says Lahood. "It's a comedy, a spoof. The film is based on the premise that lemmings commit suicide and its an atrocity that need to be stopped."

"The film continues my current preoccupation with animals and their relationship with humans" comments Lahood.

"It's wonderful to have a new film from Grant to launch at Cannes" says NZFC Marketing Manager, Kathleen Drumm. "His 4 minute film, *Snail's Pace*, featuring a determined but ill-fated snail, has earned more per minute than any other New Zealand short."

"An elusive mouse featured in *The Singing Trophy*, one of our most distinguished films. In 1993 it was awarded a Special Jury Mention for Technical Excellence at Cannes as well as the Best Short Film prize at the New Zealand Film and Television Awards", continues Drumm.

The Singing Trophy has been a top seller over the last few months, with international sales that includes SBS in Australia, Channel 4 in the UK and Canal Plus in France. Both theatrical and television rights have been tied up for Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

The Singing Trophy was very received at the Telluride Film Festival, where it was paired with the outstanding new Kieslowski film, *Blue*, which also deals with music as a central theme.

"Lemming Aid will undoubtedly be one of the most popular new titles this year at Cannes"
says Drumm.

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Lemming Aid

The Third Brisbane International Film Festival opening on 4 August - 13 August is set to showcase the best of world cinema including the world premiere of Asian/Australian director Pauline Chan's *Traps*.

According to Festival artistic director Anne Demy-Geroe, *Traps* is a highlight in an exciting programme of some 50 feature films.

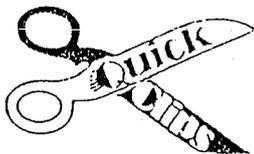
Traps, a psychological drama set in Vietnam was filmed largely in Queensland and stars English actor Saskia Reeves (*Antonia and Jane*) and young Australian actor Jackie McKenzie (*Romper Stomper* and *Stark*).

Chan will be in attendance for the world premiere at the Hoyts Regent Theatre on Saturday August 6.

The festival program also includes award winning titles from the Cannes and Berlin film festivals, the latest releases from Australia, Hollywood, the UK, Asia and Europe - featuring four latest release French films. Other highlights include director

John Dahl's (*Red Rock West*) modern sexual excursion into classic film noir, *The Last Seduction*, and renowned French director Claude Miller's latest movie, the Australian premiere of *The Accompanist*, starring hot French actress Romane Bohringer. The gay programme sponsored by Brother Sister and Queensland AIDS Council, will comprise the controversial *Savage Nights* by young French director Cyril Collard who died just before the movies release and *Leaving Lenin*. There will again be a host of award winning short films, including Australia's *Only the Brave* and *Gorgeous*, New Zealand's *Lemming Aid* and from Mexico the wonderful *Flat*. In addition, the program boasts a strong component of innovative animation and experimental films plus fascinating documentaries including Canada's award winning *Kanehsatake*.

Information Centre ph: 07 220 0444 fax 07 220 0400 located 2nd Level Wintergarden Shopping Complex, Brisbane.



Chan and Hitchcock movies for film festival

AUSTRALIAN-Asian director Pauline Chan's new film *Traps* and five early Alfred Hitchcock classics are among the 50 features to be screened during this year's third Brisbane International Film Festival, says artistic director Anne Demy-Geroe.

Traps, a psychological drama set in Vietnam and starring English actor Saskia Reeves (Antonia And Jane) and Australia's Jackie McKenzie (Romper Stomper and Star), was filmed largely in Queensland.

"We are delighted to have the world premiere of *Traps* as this is a major Australian film which also marks rising director Pauline Chan's feature debut," says Ms Demy-Geroe.

Chan is expected to be among the special guests when the film has its world premiere at Brisbane's Hoyts Regent Theatre on August 6.

The Hitchcock films, which have all been restored to their original quality courtesy of the British Film Institute, will be *Blackmail* (1929), *Murder* (1930), *Sabotage* (1936), *Secret Agent* (1936) and *The Lady Vanishes* (1938).

The 80-minute long *Blackmail* is credited with being the first British movie to feature the 'new talkies', but this is

■ By DOUGLAS KENNEDY

the later silent version made to accommodate theatres which hadn't been wired for the new technology.

The Brisbane screening will feature an organist, and the film stars Australian-born Cyril Ritchard.

The festival program also includes award-winning titles from the Cannes and Berlin Film festivals, the latest releases from Australia, Hollywood, Britain and Europe — featuring four new French releases.

The BIFF is to include a western retrospective highlighting the resurgence of the genre and will showcase a fully restored 35mm print of John Ford's *The Searchers*.

The other westerns are Robert Altman's *McCabe And Mrs Miller* and US director Maggie Greenwald's new feminist western *The Ballad Of Little Jo*.

Other highlights will include John Dahl's sexual excursion into film noir, *The Last Seduction*, French director Claude Miller's *The Accompanist* and the Cyril Collard drama *Savage Night*.

Among the award-winning shorts are Australia's *Only The Brave and Courageous*, New Zealand's *Lemming Aid*, and *Flat from Mexico*.

The BIFF goes from August 4 to 13.



□ Pauline Chan ... her new film will screen at this year's Brisbane International Film Festival.

For ticket & general enquiries call the Festival Hotline (07) 220 0444. Media or specialised information call (07) 220 0333 Fax (07) 220 0400.

According to the Premier Mr Wayne Goss, who launched the Festival on 6 June, the emphasis is on quality, variety and above all excellent entertainment at a very reasonable price.

Family features cost \$4 and packages such as the Take 3 for \$20, means that the cost averages out at less than \$7 a movie.

According to Festival general manager Gary Ellis this year's festival will have a higher general profile because of its convenient and central screening venue at the Hoyts Regent Showcase Theatre on the Queen Street Mall.

"The Information Centre will offer personal service to patrons wishing to know more about the exciting program and help with ticket purchase," Mr Ellis said.

Mr Ellis said that the Festival promotional activities would take place with the co-operation of the neighbouring Wintergarden shopping centre, the Brisbane City Heart and the Brisbane Hilton.

"We can promise a lot of fun and activity throughout the 10 days of the Festival," he said.

This year's programme includes some 45 feature films including award winning titles from the Cannes and Berlin Film Festivals, the latest releases from Australia, Hollywood and Asia and a world cinema programme with a French focus.

There will also be award winning short films including animation, experimental and documentaries.

Australian film **Muriel's Wedding** which delighted audiences at the 1994 Cannes Film Festival has been chosen to open the Festival on Thursday 4th August.

Muriel's Wedding is a bold and charming comedy set in Porpoise Point, a thinly disguised Gold Coast and opens with stocky, daggly Muriel catching the wedding bouquet.

She is thrilled but not for long - her "friends" call for a rethrow because everyone knows Muriel won't be the next to marry.

But Muriel has a family from hell: her only way out is to marry and she awaits her wedding day anaesthetised by the fantasy of Abba songs.

Muriel's wedding day does come but it doesn't bring the escape she had hoped.

The film starring **Toni Collette** was written and directed by **P J Hogan**, who makes his debut as a feature film writer and director.

"We are delighted to have the world premiere of **Traps**. This is a major Australian film which also marks rising director **Pauline Chan's** feature debut," she said.

Traps, a psychological drama set in Vietnam was filmed largely in Queensland and



Louise (Saskia Reeves) in Pauline Chan's **TRAPS**

stars English actor **Saskia Reeves (Antonia and Jane)** and young Australian actor **Jackie McKenzie (Romper Stomper and Stark)**.

Chan will be in attendance for the world premiere at the Hoyts Regent Theatre on Saturday, August 6.

There will also be a colourful Western retrospective highlighting the resurgence of the western as a genre and including John Ford's **The Searchers** - a fully restored 35mm print.

"Even among movie buffs, few will have seen this classic on the big screen," Ms Demy-Geroe said.

Also featured in the western line up will be Robert Altman's **McCabe and Mrs Miller** and the new US feminist western **The Ballad of Little Jo** written and directed by Maggie Greenwald.

Other highlights include director **John Dahl's** (Red Rock West) modern sexual excursion into classic film noir, **The Last Seduction**, and renowned French director **Claude Miller's** latest movie, the Australian premiere of **The Accompanist**, starring hot French actress **Romane Bohringer**. Bohringer also stars in Cyril Collard's controversial drama **Savage Nights**.

There will again be a host of award winning short films, including Australia's **Only the Brave** and **Gorgeous**, New Zealand's **Lemming Aid** and from Mexico the wonderful - **Flat**. In addition, the program boasts a strong component of innovative animation and experimental films plus fascinating

documentaries including Canada's award winning **Kanehsatake**.

The Sixth Generation of Chinese Filmmakers

After making a splash at this year's Rotterdam and Berlin Film Festivals, three feature films and two documentaries from Beijing's underground cinema will be presented at this year's Brisbane International Film Festival. Many independent and radical film makers are under severe attack in China. Officially these films, the freshest and most interesting films to come from China this year, were produced and exported illegally.

Hong Kong based filmmaker and distributor, **Shu Kei**, will be a special guest of the Brisbane International Film Festival and will introduce each of the films. He is a strong supporter of independent Chinese cinema and is actively seeking to have these films reach a broad audience internationally.

