

OVERSEAS
FILMGROUP



PRESENTS

“QUEEN CITY ROCKER”

PRESS KIT

"QUEEN CITY ROCKER"

PRINCIPAL CAST

SKA MATTHEW HUNTER
ANDREW MARK PILISI
SNIPER RICKY BRIBIESCA
STACY KIM WILLOUGHBY
FRAN REBECCA SAUNDERS
RYDER PETER BLAND
FLAK PEVISE VAIFALE
BUYER GEORGE HENARE
MANAGER MICHAEL MORRISEY
RYDER'S DRIVER ROB JAYNE
SKA'S SISTER GREER ROBSON

"QUEEN CITY ROCKER"

CREW LIST

Producer LARRY PARR
Director BRUCE MORRISON
Associate Producer FINOLA DWYER
Editor MICHAEL HACKING
Director of Photography KEVIN HAYWARD
Music DAVE McCARTNEY
Screenplay BILL BAER
Camera Operator JOHN MAHAFFIE
Focus Cameraman RICK ALLENDER
Clapper Loader SIMON ROELANTS
Stills Photographer KEN GEORGE
Sound Recordist GEORGE LYLE
Production Manager CHLOE SMITH
Production Assistants SHERYL MORRIS
..... VICKI WATSON
Location Manager JANET McIVOR
Unit Manager ROGER PRESTON
Unit Assistant JIM WHEELER
1st Assistant Director CHRIS SHORT
2nd Assistant Director VICTORIA HARDY
3rd Assistant Director RICHARD LAWRENCE
4th Assistant Director KARA DODSON

Continuity LINDA RAY
Designer MIKE BECROFT
Art Department Supervisor WENDY PRESTON
Props Buyer PHIL TARATO
Standby Props NEVILLE GEE
Conceptual Artist GRANT MAJOR
Scenic Artist PAUL RADFORD
Construction Manager DAVE COOKE
Carpenter NIGEL TWEED
Painter JIM McINTOSH
Wardrobe SUE GANDY
Wardrobe Assistant NICOLE WILLIAMS
Make Up Artist LESLIE VANDERWALT
Assistant Editor WAYNE COOK
Gaffer MATTHEW SLATTERY
Best Boy BRETT JARMAN
Lighting Assistant THAD LAWRENCE
Key Grip HARRY HARRISON
Grip KEVIN DONOVAN
Electrician TOM WILTON
Production Accountant AVRIL STOTT
Caterer CAROLINE GUISE
Nurse MARGARET WATKIN

"QUEEN CITY ROCKER"

THE STORY

"Street kids" - a slick phrase for something the media talks and writes about, while the middle classes shake their heads in worry from the comfort of their livingrooms.

"Queen City Rocker" isn't about to make them feel any more comfortable. A film that sprang from the streets - the title and original idea were conceived in 1981 by an Auckland street kid - "Queen City Rocker" takes a hard, fast-paced look at life on the after-dark urban streets through the eyes of a very active participant.

Ska is the Queen City Rocker, a kid who lives his life on the streets by the street's rules. With his sidekicks, Andrew and Sniper, Ska survives by the unwritten rules laid down by rival gangs, police and the men who earn a living on the edge of the law.

Ska is good - and he's smart. Smart enough to be increasingly disillusioned with the dead-end life he's leading.

Over on the other side of the tracks, Stacey is just as disillusioned with her family's complacent, wealthy life-style as Ska is with his. They meet as Ska is rolling into inevitable conflict with Jay Ryder, the crime boss whose underworld connections have now involved Ska's sister Fran, employed as a masseuse in one of Ryder's sleazy night-clubs.

Finally provoked into action, Ska stages a spectacular raid on the club, rescuing his sister - and inviting the inevitable reaction from an enraged Ryder. It isn't long in coming, resulting in the death of Andrew, Ska's best friend.

The accelerating conflict swings into its third stage when, with Ska as a catalyst, the street kids combine forces and move against Ryder in the midst of a big rock concert he has staged.

And Ska and Stacey, whose developing relationship forms the centre-piece of "Queen City Rocker", as rock music forms the soundtrack, finally turn their backs on the streets.

"QUEEN CITY ROCKER"

PRODUCTION STORY

When "Queen City Rocker" was originally conceived, street kids and growing urban violence and paranoia were new and disturbing phenomena.

Things were to become more disturbing for Aucklanders in the years to come. The Queen Street Riot in December, 1984, brought violence to the city centre when crowds at a free rock show ran rampant, looting shops and clashing openly with police.

That was all in the future when a street kid called Richard Lymposs approached Mirage Films' Larry Parr in 1981 with a 10-page outline of an idea he had for a feature film.

Parr was impressed - impressed enough to bring in a writer to develop a film treatment from the Lymposs idea. However, says Parr, it got no support from the Film Commission. "They didn't like the idea, didn't think it was the sort of film we should be making."

Parr bought the Lymposs concept anyway and at that stage even discussed the idea with director Bruce Morrison.

"Larry showed me the drafts. We both liked the idea of doing an urban movie," says Morrison. "A lot of the things happening socially seemed to demand it. There was an obvious place for a movie set among disaffected urban youth."

However, the idea was shelved and wasn't revived until Mirage films made "Bridge to Nowhere", a film starring a group of street kids who leave the city. One of Bridge's stars, 16-year-old Matthew Hunter, turned in a very good performance in the Ian Mune-directed film.

"Larry said to me afterwards, 'Isn't he like Ska' (the central

character in the "Queen City Rocker" outline?)" says Morrison.

With that in mind, Queen City Rocker was unshelved and revitalised. Writer Bill Baer was brought in for meetings with Parr and Morrison and he went off to work up a screenplay.

"A lot had happened in the meantime," says Morrison. "The Queen Street Riot and the level of community unrest had increased even more since we first talked about it."

Larry Parr's reasons for wanting Morrison to direct "Queen City Rocker" were simple. "First, because we have a good working relationship. And, second, because he's done a lot of rock video clips and I saw this film as having a lot of music in it."

Morrison admits that he came into "Queen City Rocker" initially more out of a sense of "duty" than anything else.

"Larry and Mirage had a policy of attempting to form a sound commercial base by turning over a certain number of films with commercial value on a low budget in order to win points on the market. This would then allow them to do the stuff they wanted to - the stuff with more personal value.

"Bridge to Nowhere" was done with that in mind - a low budget action adventure aimed at a known market. And "Queen City Rocker" was aimed at the same market. I came in as a contract director to say, 'OK, this is the object of the exercise'. So my first approach was a technical one."

Once into the exercise though, Morrison became more deeply involved.

"Urban Auckland is a bizarre place. There are buildings being pulled down and put up, there's an intensive gang situation, people look strange, there's a mix of races and styles borrowed from England, Harlem, Trinidad, everywhere. It suddenly seemed like a highly colourful area in which to make a movie.

"In fact, most of the things surrounding us as we made the film were a lot more highly coloured than what we were doing.

I also read a lot of Raymond Chandler books - highly coloured, seamy yarns with a seething underworld life - so I had a natural taste for this sort of story."

Morrison was drawn to the character of Ska too. "I felt a natural affinity with his outlook, which was fairly bleak."

Making this film was no easy business, though. The biggest hassle for director, crew and cast was that "Queen City Rocker" was 80% a night movie.

Says Morrison, "All New Zealand movies have night scenes and when the big night shoot comes off, it's a big deal. There's two or three days in the middle of the shoot when everybody gets keyed up, the big trucks roll out with the big lights.

"We were doing it routinely every night for five weeks."

He admits it was a nightmare from a technical point of view. It was also physically punishing on everyone involved.

"It was really gruelling," says Morrison. "Because dawn came at the end of the working day, you were always working through the low ebb of your metabolism. At the same time, the urgency was increasing. When the birds started singing, you knew you had only half an hour till dawn and maybe four more shots to do."

But now, with year-long project tied up, Parr and Morrison are convinced they've got something pretty special in "Queen City Rocker. Something pretty provocative too.

"It struck me," says Morrison, "that the mere act of putting these people in "Queen City Rocker", representing the view of people who think society is not necessarily ticking along smoothly, was a political act in itself.

"The world will find the attitude of some of the characters wanting. They won't like it, I'm sure. They won't like people swearing

and they won't like people being violent to each other and to property.

"Larry played it to some Americans and they were impressed. But they were shocked about New Zealand. Their image of New Zealand is of a peaceful place with waving palm trees. They've possibly heard of the Springbok tour and the nuclear ban, but violence in the streets? That's not known at all.

"I have a feeling the impact of that will be one of the highest profile things about this film. The fact that "Queen City Rocker" goes against a whole set of national stereotypes.

"It might upset some people, but I don't think for a moment it's inaccurate. The dialogue is real, the look is real. These are real people."

"QUEEN CITY ROCKER"

THE MUSIC

"Queen City Rocker" operates as much on a musical level as it does on a dramatic one.

That was the intention from the start - and "Queen City Rocker" broke a few rules there too.

"This film was actually edited to finished music in a lot of cases, the reverse of what normally happens", says director Bruce Morrison, a man with a strong background in making rock videos.

Morrison had a man in mind from the start to handle the music - Dave McArtney.

"I've worked with him before on video clips for his songs. We wanted a really strong soundtrack that was a good representation of the top end of the Auckland music scene.

"Dave was very much in touch with that. He has a very good ear for what works and, as a commercial rock and roll musician, he has a helluva good feel for lyrics and melody. He's done a brilliant job".

Dave McArtney is something of a New Zealand rock legend. He first sprang into the spotlight in the '70s, as guitarist, composer and sometime singer with Hello Sailor, one of New Zealand's finest ever rock bands.

When Sailor split, McArtney embarked on a highly successful solo career fronting his own band, The Pink Flamingos, who recorded three albums of McArtney's songs plus a string of singles.

Now he's back with a recently reformed Hello Sailor, whose management is currently seeking international release for an album the band has just finished mixing in New York's Electric Ladyland Studios.

McArtney was with "Queen City Rocker" from the start, bringing four completed songs with him, writing, playing and singing more and finding other Auckland music to match the film's many atmospheric and action sequences.

The musical range is wide - there's Ardijah, a South Auckland funk band who appear in "Queen City Rocker" playing their 'Give Me Your Number'. There's a touch of decadent sophistication with Wentworth Brewster's swinging smoky version of Nat King Cole's 'Welcome to the Club'.

There's the suitably ferocious punk rock of No Tag's 'Mistaken Identity', the gusty punch of Graham Brazier and Simon Alexander's 'Stand Up and Fight' and the evil industrial clang of Fetus Productions' 'Anthem'.

It's a safe bet that the "Queen City Rocker" soundtrack album will take to the charts at the same time as the film takes to the screens.

"QUEEN CITY ROCKER"

BRUCE MORRISON - DIRECTOR

Bruce Morrison has come a long way since directing his first television programme - on the intricacies of rose pruning.

"Queen City Rocker" is the innovative director's third feature film. His work has ranged through directing for the BBC, a production assistant credit with cult hero Roger Corman (on The Red Baron), directing for trend-setting television series like Review, Encounter, Castaways, Pacific People and Kaleidoscope and his ground-breaking work in making rock video clips.

Morrison was born 42 years ago in Dunedin, the heart of New Zealand's conservative south, into what he terms "a very comfortable, straight, middle class environment".

Frustrated with university, he dropped his studies in 1967 in favour of a job in Dunedin's television studios. He moved from floor manager to director in 18 months, thoroughly fascinated by the whole business of film and television and "how images went together."

That rose-pruning credit under his belt, Morrison worked his way through the whole range television had to offer in those early days, including making some of New Zealand's first rock music clips.

Every week Morrison would choose a record from the charts and make a film to run with it for the children's show, Five Live.

Morrison's growing interest in film-making didn't find much outlet in a cinematic back water like Dunedin, and in 1969 he quit television and went overseas, working as a BBC director in London and Birmingham and as production assistant on various films, including Corman's "The Red Baron".

In 1972, he returned to New Zealand - and Dunedin, where he worked on television current affairs, moving to Auckland in 1974 to work on an adventurous arts programme, Review, with fellow directors

Hamish Keith and Keith Hunter (father of "Queen City Rocker" star Matthew).

From there, he moved to Encounters, a documentary series, and Castaway, a drama series based in the South Pacific.

He left television again in 1977, though he continued the association as a contract director, producing and directing films like Red Deer, which attracted international attention. Morrison made an impression too with some excellent documentary work like Pacific People and profiles of New Zealand writers Frank Sargeson and Witi Ihimaera for the television arts programme, Kaleidoscope.

His aim now was to make a feature film, but with the New Zealand film industry still in its infancy, it would be 1984 before his first project would emerge.

"Constance" was a distinguished first effort, looking at the stifling aspects of life in the New Zealand of 30 and 40 years ago.

And while "Constance" was developing, Morrison continued his interest in television, directing a memorable series of profiles of New Zealand artists for Kaleidoscope and establishing himself as one of the country's most stylish makers of rock video clips - for "Queen City Rocker" musical director Dave McArtney, among others.

"QUEEN CITY ROCKER"

MATTHEW HUNTER PLAYS SKA

Matthew Hunter is the reason "Queen City Rocker" was made.

The story outline had been sitting, half-forgotten, on producer Larry Parr's shelf for four years, when Parr and director Bruce Morrison were moved to pull it down and blow the dust off.

What moved them was the performance by 16 year old Matthew Hunter in the Mirage Films production of "Bridge to Nowhere".

"When we were casting "Bridge to Nowhere", he (Matthew) used to keep coming into Mirage", says Parr. "I didn't like the look of him at all. He wasn't what I wanted to have in "Bridge". I wanted something a little more cleancut".

Parr changed his mind when "Bridge" director Ian Mune showed him an audition he'd filmed with Hunter. "The moment I saw Matthew on the screen, I was aware he had this amazing presence", says Parr.

Says Morrison, "Larry said to me, 'Wouldn't he make a good Ska?'. And with that in mind, we went back to the "Queen City Rocker" draft".

"Queen City Rocker" is only Matthew Hunter's second feature film. The son of television drama director Keith Hunter, in his early teens he made a few minor appearances in television series. But on leaving school at 16, he didn't settle on a job until he tripped over a newspaper ad seeking young hopefuls to audition for "Bridge to Nowhere".

And now "Queen City Rocker" - and Ska, a role everyone involved agrees Hunter was almost custom-made for.

"I liked the character of Ska", says Bruce Morrison. "He has analysed society and as far as he's concerned, it's a mess. Because of his natural abilities and his mates, he's able to get himself together a good set of street reflexes. He can survive pretty well. But he can't help thinking it's no way to live".

Hunter was 'very right' for the role, says Morrison. "Matthew is a fairly taciturn character, he has strong views and he's an analytical observer. I think he has a lot in common with Ska".

"QUEEN CITY ROCKER"

KIM WILLOUGHBY PLAYS STACEY

Kim Willoughby was 'on top of the list' when it came to casting "Queen City Rocker".

Producer Larry Parr had used her in a couple of small parts previously and had tried to talk her into a role in the recent Mirage Films production, "Bridge to Nowhere".

"Queen City Rocker" director Bruce Morrison first came across her when he did a video clip of the all female rock band she used to front, The Gurlz. "I knew she photographed brilliantly and that she was a very bubbling, alive sort of person. So she was a first thought".

She has an ongoing singing career, but apart from some television appearances, "Queen City Rocker" is Kim Willoughby's first major acting role.

It won't be her last. She plays Stacey, the rich girl who, as disillusioned with her life as Ska is with his, forms the other half of the unlikely romantic pairing that is central to the "Queen City Rocker" story.

"QUEEN CITY ROCKER"

PETER BLAND PLAYS JAY RYDER

Playing "Queen City Rocker" heavy Jay Ryder comes as a complete change of face for Peter Bland after his last major film role.

Then, the British born actor was winning fans as Wes Pennington in Mirage Films' highly successful comedy, "Came A Hot Friday".

Now, he's Jay Ryder, a hood in an expensive suit whose big city crime syndicate has ensnared Ska, his friends and rivals and his sister, Fran.

But variety is nothing new to Bland, a man whose career has encompassed poetry, writing and acting - on stage in New Zealand and in London's West End, on television (Minder and The Bob Hope Show are just two of his credits) and in film.

A self-confessed fan of the New Zealand style of film making, Peter Bland isn't finished changing faces on cinema screens.

"QUEEN CITY ROCKER"

MARK PILISI PLAYS ANDREW

Sixteen year old Mark Pilisi was a real-life Auckland street kid when he stepped into a film career, playing Tug Morton in "Other Halves", the story of a Polynesian teenager who forms a relationship with a 32 year old middle class white woman.

And he got closer to his wish that acting the role "could have gone on forever" when he was asked to play Andrew, Ska's tough, easy-going friend in the Mirage Films production of "Queen City Rocker".

"Mark was an obvious choice for the role", says director Bruce Morrison. "I thought he was brilliant in "Other Halves". His acting in it opened up a whole area for me. Whenever the Polynesian gang came on the screen, the whole cinema just came alive".

For Morrison it "raised the whole thing of why I'm into "Queen City Rocker" - realising that what the audience was reacting to was someone who was recognisable. Someone like them on the screen. Not reaffirming attitudes, just being there. Being a representative on the screen".

For Mark Pilisi who, like Matthew Hunter, at 17 is starring in his second major feature film, "Queen City Rocker" offered another chance to bring to the cinema screen something he knows intimately - life on the city streets.

"QUEEN CITY ROCKER"

FACES - OLD AND NEW

"Queen City Rocker" turns the rules upside down in more ways than one.

Apart from Peter Bland, who plays crime boss Jay Ryder, the film's major faces are all young and very new.

While, lurking further down the cast list with minor roles, are some of the names and faces of the New Zealand movie scene.

There's Roy Billing, playing Stacey's decadent father in a poolside party scene, Auckland stage actor George Henare, playing Jay Ryder's right-hand heavy, and cameo appearances from Martyn Sanderson and Annie Whittle.

A lot of the other minor roles went to friends of the film's stars, Matthew Hunter and Mark Pilisi, plus a large contingent from Auckland's Polynesian Nga Tupuwai College.

"The Polynesians acquitted themselves incredibly well", says director Bruce Morrison. "It just shows what a depth of talent there is. We're just scratching the surface".

There's also -

Rebecca Saunders, who plays Ska's sister, Fran. Though only 20, she can count 12 years involvement in drama, starting with classes, aged eight, and on through work with Centrepoint Theatre, Auckland's New Independent, Television New Zealand's rock drama series, Heroes, and a part in New Zealand's first major horror movie, "Death Warmed Up". She's currently completing a Diploma in Drama.

Ricky Bribiesca, who plays Ska's friend Sniper, is making his screen debut aged 18. For him, making "Queen City Rocker" was "an adventure". He puts travelling overseas before further acting.

Greer Robson, who plays Ska's young sister, on the other hand, is something of a veteran, thanks to a stage debut aged three and her role in Roger Donaldson's much admired "Smash Palace".

QUEEN CITY ROCKER

LARRY PARR - PRODUCER

Larry Parr is moving fast.

In the three years his Mirage Films has been operating, the company has turned out a remarkable six feature films - "Constance", "Pallet on the Floor", "Came A Hot Friday", "Shaker Run", "Bridge to Nowhere", and now "Queen City Rocker".

And right now, he has about seven other projects at various stages of development.

Simply, he wants to establish Mirage as the first New Zealand company operating as an international production house.

Big thinking for a country boy. Parr was born 34 years ago in a small town called Raetihi (where, years later, "Bridge to Nowhere" would be shot.) He studied law at Auckland University, holding down a fulltime job as a legal assistant with one of New Zealand's biggest film distributors all the while.

Leaving university with his law degree, he joined merchant bankers Broadbank, where, oddly enough, he'd find his first real involvement in film-making, Kiwi-style.

"Towards the mid-1970s, there were half a dozen people itching to put together a feature film," says Parr. "Broadbank had several approaches for finance and, because of my background with Kerridge Odeon, I was always the one asked to look into the projects."

One of the projects was accepted by Broadbank - a film called "Sleeping Dogs", produced and directed, in 1977, by Roger Donaldson and Ian Mune.

The first New Zealand feature film made in 11 years, "Sleeping Dogs" kick-started a fledgling industry, and pushed Parr into setting up his own company - Mirage Films - in 1979.

For his first 18 months, Parr learned the film-making ropes working under contract to Donaldson's Aardvark Films, as production manager on its television commercials.

Parr's first step beyond commercials came with Donaldson's feature, Smash Palace. As associate producer, Parr couldn't have picked a better film.

Now acknowledged as one of New Zealand's finest films, Smash Palace won rave reviews from the overseas critics and shot Roger Donaldson into the international scene, directing such films as The Bounty and Marie.

Mirage Films moved into its own offices and started investing in future projects, such as "Pallet on the Floor", "Constance" and "Came A Hot Friday".

Parr's next major break came in 1982, when he landed the associate producer slot on "Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence", which starred Jack Thompson, Tom Conti and rock star David Bowie.

From there, Mirage was off and running, with "Shaker Run" earning the title of the highest-grossing movie made in New Zealand (sales total over \$2 million so far) and "Bridge to Nowhere" the first New Zealand film to presell for a sum equal to its entire budget.

A feat repeated by Mirage's latest production "Queen City Rocker".

Larry Parr is moving fast.
