

ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT



RESTORATION

A SHORT & SHARP/RED TREE FILM

LOGLINE

A struggling painter takes on a commission that promises fame but may cost him his soul.

SYNOPSIS

Francis is a struggling aspiring artist, who receives an unusual proposition from a mysterious art dealer during another of his fruitless exhibitions. In return for restoring an old oil painting by an obscure artist, Benjamin Brooke offers to represent and propel him into stardom. Claiming that his employer is a rich and influential man, Benjamin convinces initially hesitant Francis.

From the very first moment Francis sees the painting, it has a beguiling effect on him.

Working on the painting sets off a strange series of events that become increasingly threatening. It seems like more and more of the painting leaks out to haunt Francis in his real life. Worse still, an inexplicable and sinister male figure in the painting, the Gentleman, seems to develop a life of his own. Every time Francis paints him, the figure reappears, in different parts of the composition.

When the visions can no longer be ignored Francis demands an explanation from Benjamin. Never denying the visions, Benjamin manages to placate the artist and get him to finish the job.

Francis returns home and confronts the Gentleman, who has reappeared again, menacingly close to the edge of the canvas. Francis works feverishly through the night and finishes the restoration, erasing the Gentleman for the final time. But only moments later, a terrifying transition frees the painting's menacing prisoner, who turns out to be Benjamin's employer.

At a private showing organised by Benjamin, Francis' paintings sell out, marking the beginning of his artistic legacy. But the price Francis pays for his fame is high indeed – he has traded places with the Gentleman and is now trapped in the painting that he has restored.

TIM TSIKLARI, WRITER/DIRECTOR

Tim is originally from the Republic of Georgia, where he lived all his childhood before moving to Moscow, Russia, to study Business. After graduating with a Finance major, Tim moved to New Zealand and spent the next five years working in various accounting and finance roles. But eventually the childhood dream to make movies took over. He went to South Seas Film and Television School and graduated with a Directing and Screenwriting major. Since then he has written, directed and produced eight short films, including 'Personal Ad' which was funded by Creative NZ. In 2012 Tim co-wrote and directed 'Roy', which played at several NZ festivals and on Rialto Channel. In 2013 Tim co-wrote and directed 'Russian Dolls', which was selected to play at MashROME festival in Italy and subsequently gained an international distribution through an Italian company. Most recently, he has co-written and directed 'Restoration', a creepy tale of a haunted painting, funded by NZ Film Commission through the highly competitive programme Premiere Shorts. The film will be released early 2015.

He also ran a small production company for six years, directing and producing promotional and educational videos. And, he has worked in theatre (as a director) and taught filmmaking to young adults. In the last five years Tim has focused on making his first feature film 'Crackheads', which he also co-wrote and directed. The film has been nominated for Best Narrative Film at Oaxaca Film Festival in Mexico and the prestigious Austin Film Festival in the USA. It screened at both festivals to full theatres and subsequently was invited to four more festivals. The film won two awards for Best Screenplay and Best Ensemble at LA Comedy Festival as well as getting the Moa for the Best Self-Funded Feature Film at NZ Film Awards. 'Crackheads' gained distribution in the US and Spain, where it will be released early 2015.

Tim has written over ten screenplays, two of which have been optioned. He is currently working on the feature length version of his latest short film. Tim lives and breathes film: his biggest challenge in life is to find things unrelated to his film career aspirations. In that regard, he's a narrow-minded and self-centric bore. But that's what also makes him an utterly dedicated and tireless professional, who is 100% committed to realizing his self-proclaimed prophecy: to make moving pictures that inspire and entertain audiences all over the world.

NICOLA PEEPERKOORN, PRODUCER

Nicola Jayne Peeperkoorn (pronounced peppercorn) was born and raised in the City of Sails – Auckland, New Zealand. Her first script, a vampire romance epic, stalled during pre-production – which she blames upon being 12 in a time before Twilight, when video cameras were scarce. After several attempts she completed her first short film at 16 – ‘On the Way Down’, an unflinching look at teenage drug abuse.

In 2004 she attended film school completing a Double Major in Production and Drama Directing/Screen Writing. Since graduating, she has worked on a number of productions in the Auckland film and television industry, recently in the accounts department.

Nicola has produced over 20 low budget short films. This led to her receiving New Zealand Film Commission financing in 2014 for the short film ‘Restoration’, currently in postproduction. She also regularly writes and directs with business partner Andrew Cooper. Their most recent completed short film ‘Help’ won Best Film, Best Actor and the Audience Award at Tropfest New Zealand in 2014 and is currently screening in festivals internationally.

In 2008 she embarked on her ambitious first feature, ‘The Richmond Family Massacre’, then in 2012 she joined the team of independent feature ‘Crackheads’ as a co-producer. Crackheads played several international festivals including Austin Film Festival (which Nicola attended) and has won numerous awards including ‘Best Self Funded Feature’ at the New Zealand Film Awards in 2013. Her next feature film ‘Sex With an Alien’ is currently in development.

To complement her production work, Nicola recently completed a Diploma in Marketing Communications from Massey University, in Auckland. She has also furthered her knowledge of worldwide sales and marketing by attending the American Film Market four times and was part of its inaugural Producers’ Forum in 2013.

LUKE WATKINSON, WRITER

Luke's a native kiwi who has been working around movies since his first part time job at a Village 8 Cinema. Moving to a Video Ezy for a number of years while he completed a Bachelor of Arts degree at Auckland University, double majoring in Film, Television and Media, and English, with a minor in Performing Arts. After he graduated he took a big leap and became a freelance filmmaker, and is currently working full time as a director and editor in the commercial market, and writing occasional screenplays when the opportunity arises.

Luke has been heavily involved in north of thirty short films, music videos and short documentaries, in addition to his freelance work, including recent shorts "Stay With Me", "Roy" and "Crash Course" and music videos "Bless My Enemies" and "Leaving". He worked as a second unit director on "Crackheads" and has headed up a team for eleven consecutive 48hours films.

With a healthy combination of confidence, belligerence, and eagerness to experiment and face challenges, Luke is eager to move onto the next chapter of his life as a filmmaker, where there are budgets, and people to help do the jobs he's less than enthusiastic about. Luke prides himself on an ability to produce unique and effective films, focused on telling well crafted stories that try to share the (often slanted) way he sees the world around him. And his creative zeal, unique vision, encyclopaedic knowledge of film, and determination to do his best work on every outing are the tools he uses to do just that.

CAST

FRANCIS - MILO CAWTHORNE

Milo began acting in Whangarei at age 11, appearing in several 'Northland Youth Theatre' plays up to age 17, when he travelled to London as a member of the 'New Zealand Young Shakespeare Company'.

From there he assumed he would breeze into drama school... He didn't. Instead he worked as a pizza deliverer for a year. He was eventually cast as the 'Green Power Ranger' in the 17th season of the franchise, then '360' at the NZ international arts festival in 2010. Milo then went to Los Angeles in 2011 to act in a noir thriller 'Blood Punch', and stayed in the US for two years.

Since then he's: re-visited '360' at the Civic, acted in a NZ WWI drama series 'When We Go to War', and shot a NZ horror/comedy feature called 'Deathgasm'. 'Restoration' was a passion project for Milo and he was keen to be involved in the production from the moment he read the awesome script.

BENJAMIN – ALISTAIR BROOWNING

Alistair has been an actor for more years than you can imagine. He has worked extensively in Film, Television and Theatre and has done so in New Zealand, Australia and England. He is very silly and should be taken with a grain (just a grain, mind) of salt.

His career highlights include numerous awards, work on films such as Shopping, Rain and Lord of the Rings, TV shows like When We go to War, Siege and Xena as well as many theatre productions including A Midsummer Nights Dream, Antony and Cleopatra and an International Actors Fellowship Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

My intention was to tell a sombre mysterious morality tale in the tradition of classic gothic psychological horror, a visually haunting tale of desire versus fear that is meant to creep under your skin and leave you pondering after its end. We mainly relied on things suggested and unseen for suspense rather than gore, violence or alien creatures. I was inspired by the works Edgar Allan Poe, E.T.A. Hoffmann, H.P. Lovecraft, Ray Bradbury, Stephen King, as well as The Twilight Zone and The Night Gallery TV Series.

I chose to make this film for two main reasons: firstly, I think it's both entertaining and meaningful, a character driven horror meets morality tale; secondly, I plan to use it as a platform for a feature film based on a similar idea, a deal-with-the-devil character driven story that can be realised on a tight budget and still manage to have a wide commercial appeal.

While never intended as a horror film at the time of writing, the film evolved more and more into an eerie atmospheric piece with several horror beats. The gradual evolution of the painting's hold on Francis' reality is mirrored with the Gentleman's growing proximity to the edge of the canvas. Francis has more than one chance to escape, but his desire for success is too strong, and restoring this painting may be just his only ticket to fame. I focused on the growing sense of inevitability and the dread of what it would actually mean for the protagonist to have the painting fully restored.

I hope this film works both as a self-contained piece, playing around the world in various festivals, and as a working concept for my next film, a feature length story of Francis putting his soul in peril when he comes across another haunted and very cunning painting.

PRODUCTION NOTES

This project was initially started as a way for writer/director Tim Tsiklauri, co-writer Luke Watkinson and producer Nicola Peeperkoorn to continue their working relationship after the feature film 'Crackheads'. Executive producers Michelle Turner and Nick Ward were inspired by the project and agreed to fund it as part of the New Zealand Film Commission's Premiere Short programme.

The film script proved to be its greatest asset in engaging a talented cast and crew throughout every stage of the film's production. During pre-production the greatest challenge was to develop a way to bring the film's central element the painting to life.

Our key prop, the painting, was created in multiple stages. Firstly, we hired an artist who conceived the image. We then found the location that matched our vision, cast the actors and designed both the set and the costumes. We created several photo images, with the Gentleman photographed in the environment separately. Our digital artist composited the images together, giving us 9 different versions of the painting, where everything except the Gentleman was identical. We developed our own digital painting tools that were applied to convert the still into a painting. We hired a specialist printer who treated canvases before printing the images. Then we gave the prints to our original artist, who painted over all 9 canvases, using various techniques to give it realistic texture. We conducted several camera tests along the way. Lastly, our Art Department aged the painting, leaving "restored" areas untouched.

The Art Department team, led by the innovative and experienced Lyn Berquist also did a fantastic job in creating the set for Francis's studio. With the limited budget many people were called in to help create the detail rich environment including both Nicola and Tim's fathers who helped to build various aspects for the production.

The film was shot over a period of five days on an Alexa helmed by experienced DOP Duncan Cole. Tim and Duncan spent days visualizing the end result which helped tremendously on set with the film's short shooting time frame. The entire crew all came together amazingly well to ensure that every problem was solved and that Tim's creative vision for the film was not compromised more than absolutely necessary to deliver.

Another ambitious aspect of the project was the VFX. This project allowed the core creative team to experiment in an avenue that we had little experience in before. VFX Artist Simon Dye did a fantastic job of bringing together the vision of the project within the budget and timeframe and once added into the framework created by all of the other hard working post team, particularly editor Edward Sampson, the film became a seamless whole.

For the Gentleman's exit, we developed a special sticky substance that had paint like viscosity. We applied it to the actor on set and shot all our footage of him against white screens. We then used compositing and grading tools to insert him into the painting and the filmed footage, using pre-visualised and already filmed plates.

Overall with such an ambitious project we were blessed to have such a hard-working, supportive and creative team behind us every step of the way to ensure we could deliver a film that will hopefully stick with people long after they have seen it.

CAST

Francis Milo Cawthorne
Benjamin Alistair Browning
Gentleman Greg Smith
Art Critic Peter Ford
Art Collector John Clarke

Family

Vanessa Riddell
Brighde Riddell
Michael Mods
Isabella Gatehouse

Benjamin's Assistants

Ronny Couling
Aliasha Norcross

Gallery

Justine Hunter
Kaylin Vrettos
Katherine Brook
Sy Fong
Dane Dawson
Sean O'Connell

Auction

Rachel Aylward
Deb Byrnan
Darren Stoneman
Sandy Leo
Kevy Sing Hoi Ng
Mosty Tanthatsawat
Sue Dockery

CREW

Director Tim Tsiklauri
Producer Nicola Peeperkoorn
Written By Tim Tsiklauri & Luke Watkinson
Executive Producers Michelle Turner & Nick Ward

DOP Duncan Cole
Editor Edward Sampson

Production Designer Lyn Bergquist
Art Director Richard Cooke

Costume Designer Amber Rhodes
Key Make Up Artist Celeste Strewé
Special Effects Make Up John Howard

Visual Effects By Simon Dye
Title Design and Credits Jonathan Lamb
Colourist Gerard Ward

Sound Design & Mix Bruce Langley
Music By Joseph Bennie

PRODUCTION

Casting Director Greg Smith
1st AD Sez Niederer
3rd AD Greg Smith
Continuity Lydia Moore
Luke Watkinson
Production Manager Jarl Devine
Production Assistant Aliasha Norcross
Production Runner Cortney Stowers
Location Scout Paul Rhodes
Stills Photographer Ruth Hollingsworth

CAMERA

1st AC Kirsten Green
Bradley Willimese
Alex Campbell
2nd AC Max Harsant
Larryn Rae
Additional Camera Assistant David Chan

LIGHTING

Transformer Film and TV
Gaffer Craig Muirhead
John Bell
Best Boy/Grip Fraser McKay
Ka Segerburg
LX Assistant Matt Kofoed

ART DEPARTMENT

Art Department Assistant Thomas Sutcliffe
Concept and Storyboard Artist Dwayne Cameron
Paintings By Dean Tercel

HERO PAINTING

Touch up Painter Dwayne Cameron
Print Supervisor Nick Fedaeff
Digital Artist Simon Dye

COSTUME & MAKE-UP

COSTUME STANDBY Lissy Mayer
COSTUME ASSIST Lina M. Cruz
MAKE-UP ARTIST Brighde Riddell

SOUND

Sound Recordist Ben Vanderpoel
Peter Kraan
Foley Artists Gareth Van Neikerk
Amy Barber

POST

Post Production Coordinator Edward Sampson
VFX Supervisor Luke Watkinson