



QANTAS FILM &
TELEVISION
BEST SHORT FILM
NEW ZEALAND
2008



OFFICIAL SELECTION
61st Film Festival
Locarno
2008

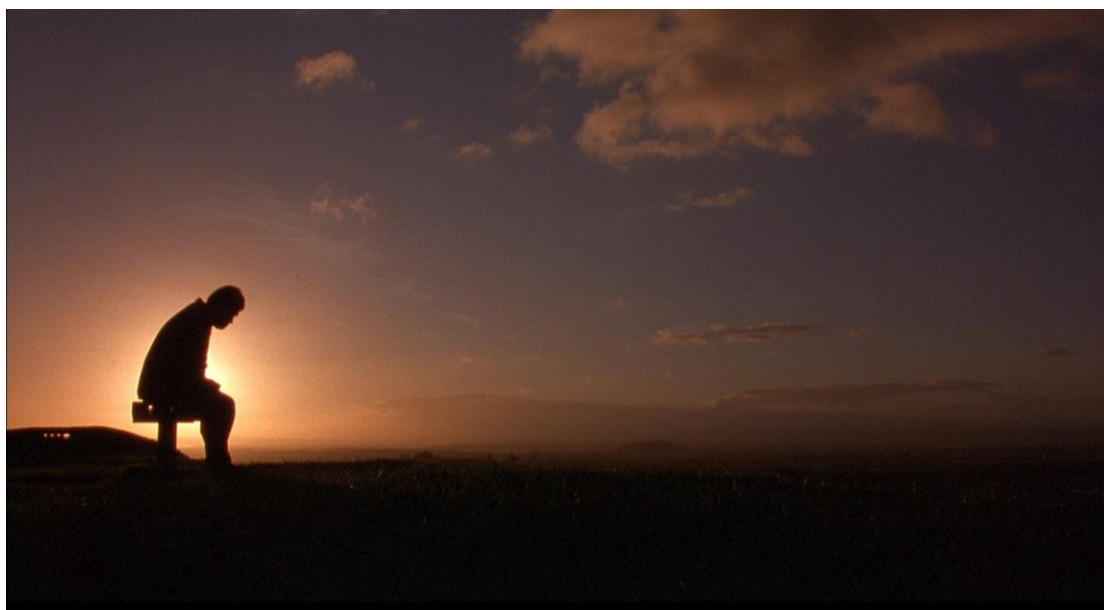


QANTAS FILM &
TELEVISION
BEST PERFORMANCE
IN A SHORT FILM
NEW ZEALAND
2008



QANTAS FILM &
TELEVISION
BEST SCREENPLAY
IN A SHORT FILM
NEW ZEALAND
2008

The Graffiti of Mr Tupaia



PRESS KIT

A SHORT FILM BY CHRISTOPHER DUDMAN

I N T E R N A T I O N A L S A L E S

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NEW ZEALAND FILM

PRODUCTION NOTES

DIRECTOR
WRITER
PRODUCER
PRODUCTION COMPANY

Christopher Dudman
Paul Stanley Ward
Vicky Pope
POP Film Ltd

Based on the short story “The Graffiti of Mr Kynyatta” by Michael Griffith

35MM • DOLBY DIGITAL • COLOUR • 14:48 MINS • 1.85:1 • NEW ZEALAND

ONE LINER

When a Cook Island school cleaner answers an unusual graffiti message, his life, and the life of the mysterious author will never be the same again.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Mr Tupaia, a Cook Island school cleaner, plods through his routine. He is proud, diligent but silent as he cleans, isolated from the young students by his age, job and race. When he finds a provocative graffiti message in the girls’ toilet cubicle he is compelled by the words to risk a reply. An unexpected response from the mysterious author begins a secret conversation on the toilet wall. When Mr Tupaia finally discovers the identity of his correspondent and the reason for her messages, his response changes both of their lives forever.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Mr Tupaia, an immigrant cleaner at a NZ school, plods through his routine: cleaning at night after the kids have been drained from the hallways and rooms, isolated from other people by his age, job and race. Proud and diligent, but silent, he returns each day to the humble state house he shared with his wife before she passed away.

While scrubbing graffiti in the girls’ swimming pool toilet he discovers an unusual message amongst the usual “School sux” and “Sally is a slut” graffiti. It reads: “I want to die”. He is stilled. When he is unable to find anyone to report it to, he is provoked enough to risk a reply, his own graffiti question: “Why?”

He doesn’t really expect a response, but he gets one and a unique graffiti conversation evolves on the toilet wall. Despite crossing the boundaries of his job, and risking being caught, it becomes a part of his routine that he relies on and looks forward to with apprehension. Who is his curious correspondent? It doesn’t matter. Mr Tupaia is compelled to continue even when the questions get difficult and his lazy, crass, co-cleaner gets suspicious.

A swimming costume stuffed into a toilet cistern provides the first clue to the identity of the student. The turning point comes as Mr Tupaia is confronted with a stunning reality check. The bubble of this graffiti relationship is popped as he encounters his correspondent, Lena, in the toilet. Mr Tupaia sees that she is the victim of domestic abuse and has been hiding in the cubicle to avoid having to expose her battered body during swimming class.

As he reels in shock, a teacher walks in, catching him awkward, compromised and alone in the toilet with Lena. Mr Tupaia fails to take the opportunity to communicate Lena's devastating secret to the teacher and she hurriedly leaves dragging Lena behind her to the swimming class outside.

Mr Tupaia once more attempts to relay his discovery to the teacher but she quickly dismisses him, unwilling to listen. Mr Tupaia, unsure what to do, is tormented by the weight of his responsibility to Lena.

The next day a class lines up chattering and excited by the pool. Lena straggles behind, curious and filled with dread at the thought of another swimming class. But when she gets to the edge of the pool...its empty. The glimpse of a smile crosses Lena's face but this quickly disappears when she catches sight of Mr Tupaia talking animatedly to the teacher, who finally appears to be listening. The teacher looks across the pool at Lena and hurries towards her. Mr Tupaia has done the right thing, but his fleeting connection with Lena is over.

AWARDS

- 2008 24th Interfilm Short Film Festival Berlin, Germany- *Best Film Against Violence and Intolerance*
- 2008 Qantas Film & Television Award for *Best Short Film*, New Zealand
- 2008 Qantas Film & Television Award for *Best Performance in a Short Film- Rawiri Paratene*, New Zealand
- 2008 Qantas Film & Television Award for *Best Screenplay in a Short Film*
- 2008 In the Bin Short Film Festival, Australia- *Best Cinematographer*

FESTIVAL SCREENINGS

- 2008 Wairoa Maori Film Festival, New Zealand
- 2008 New Zealand International Film Festivals, New Zealand
- 2008 61st Film Festival Locarno, Switzerland
- 2008 Sao Paulo Short Film Festival, Brazil
- 2008 Montreal World Film Festival, Canada
- 2008 Hamptons International Film Festival, New York, USA
- 2008 42nd Hof International Film Festival, Germany
- 2008 In the Bin Short Film Festival, Australia
- 2008 Middle East Film Festival, United Arab Emirates
- 2008 46th International Festival of Documentary and Short Film, Bilbao, Spain
- 2008 27th Uppsala International Short Film Festival, Sweden
- 2008 24th Interfilm Short Film Festival Berlin, Germany
- 2009 Magma Short Film Festival, New Zealand
- 2009 St. Kilda Film Festival, Australia
- 2009 Seattle International Film Festival, USA
- 2009 Wairoa Maori Film Festival, New Zealand
- 2009 Cannes Cinefiles- Cinema des Antipodes, France
- 2009 Maori Film Festival- Horowhenua, New Zealand
- 2009 Traverse Film Festival, USA
- 2009 St Tropez Antipodes International Film Festival, France
- 2009 Istanbul International Short Film Festival, Turkey
- 2009 Show Me Shorts, New Zealand

ABOUT THE STORY...

The Graffiti of Mr Tupaia is based on the Australian short story *The Graffiti of Mr Kynyatta* by Michael Griffith, adapted for screen by Paul Stanley Ward.

We responded to the story of a character, Mr Tupaia, dignified but silent and isolated in his environment, who finds a unique way to communicate and connect. The film depicts an original scenario in which two unlikely people (a lonely immigrant school cleaner and an abused young girl) establish a connection, overcoming barriers of gender, class, race, age and language.

From the outset we saw this story as a distinctly cinematic one. The language that Mr Tupaia finds to communicate to Lena in, first through graffiti, then by emptying the swimming pool, is visual; a way of 'talking' without speech. Though there are key passages of dialogue, the story could almost be a silent film.

The film's depiction of an older man's intimate connection with a young girl also has a particular contemporary tension. Societal paranoia about sexual abuse perpetrated by men on young children means the default instinct is to view a situation like the one Mr Tupaia finds himself in with Lena, with suspicion and mistrust. In New Zealand few male teachers teach in kindergartens, kids no longer walk to school alone. *The Graffiti of Mr Tupaia* subverts the expectation that the intentions of Mr Tupaia are culpable and instead offers the possibility of human nature as compassionate.

What this story conveys is the human hope that the significance of our lives is determined by our efforts to connect; by having the courage to sympathise with another human being and act.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

I was immediately drawn to the idea of graffiti as a means of communication. It struck me as an original premise and the first words scrawled on the toilet cubicle wall had me hooked from the start. We couldn't ask for a more compelling

beginning to a short film and our greatest challenge was to pay that off in a satisfying and meaningful way.

Research told us that a lot of child abuse comes to light in schools, particularly in the summer time when children's bodies are more often exposed. It also revealed that many teachers are wary of getting involved in cases of abuse and that the children themselves often feel they are to blame and deserve the physical abuse dished out by their parent or parents... And, more often than not, are afraid of losing their parent if they tell someone about it.

This subject gave the story the gravity and relevance it needed and I determined to treat it with the complexity it deserved. Child abuse is prevalent in New Zealand society and is generally portrayed in the media as a predominantly ethnic (Maori, Pacific Islander) problem so this was also an opportunity to challenge conventional expectations.

Mr Tupaia's character combined with the atmosphere of a school after hours set a nice tone for the film. I liked being privy to the silent, often lonely, world of an immigrant school cleaner who is taken for granted and almost invisible to those around him. I liked watching him come out of his shell; concerned at first to see words that could have reflected his own state of being, curious to discover who he was communicating with, and finally shocked to discover what the conversation was really about.

The toilet cubicle where the graffiti conversation between Lena and Mr Tupaia happens is, for want of a better word, a confessional. And I always imagined Mr Tupaia's intervention on Lena's behalf as having a positive outcome for all concerned.

The Graffiti of Mr Tupaia offered the very exciting prospect of telling a dramatic story almost entirely in pictures: in sympathy with the core theme of human connection (and failure to communicate).

In the end I think we've told a simple truth with layers of meaning and a good heart.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Christopher Dudman studied painting in New Zealand before doing his MA in film-making at the Royal College of Art in London. His graduation film *Blackwater Summer* was nominated for a student Oscar in 1989 and went on to win Best European Short Film at Cork, Best Film at the Munich International Student Film Festival, the Young Jury Prize at the Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival, and Best Director and the Public Prize at Tours.

Christopher went on to edit short films and work as an assistant director and editor on documentaries for British television. He wrote and directed several arts documentaries for the BBC, C4, Thames Television and for the Arts Council of

Great Britain; one called *Sandman* received a British Television Society award and was also exhibited at the Tate Gallery.

On his return to New Zealand in 1995 he researched and wrote two 90 minute episodes of 'New Zealand at War' a landmark documentary series about World War Two for TVNZ.

Since then Christopher has been directing television commercials and developing feature projects.

He set up Robber's Dog Films in 2006 and is presently developing two feature films - *We Will Not Cease* (the Archibald Baxter Story) with poet Glenn Colquhoun and *One of Us* about two agents working for the NZ Police Undercover Programme in the 1980s with Norelle Scott.

WRITER'S BIOGRAPHY

Paul Stanley Ward is a 31 year-old writer based in Wellington, Aotearoa-New Zealand. He has written two NZ Film Commission-funded short films: *The Graffiti of Mr Tupaia* and *Choice Night* (dir. Jane Shearer and Steve Ayson) and has two feature scripts in development.

He is Series Writer for the TVNZ documentary series *Here To Stay* (on the settler groups that have made New Zealand home), and is writer for an upcoming TVNZ documentary series, *Undercover*, (on NZ's undercover police program), both produced by the Gibson Group. He worked as a Story Producer in the US for the Discovery Channel show *No Opportunity Wasted*, and he held the same role for the TVNZ iteration for Great Southern Television. He is currently sitting on the assessment committee of Creative New Zealand's Screen Innovation Production Fund.

Paul was Senior Editor of New Zealand Edge (www.nzedge.com), graduated BA (Hons) in English Literature and NZ History from Victoria University of Wellington, and has a Masters degree from the University of Oxford

PRODUCER'S BIOGRAPHY

Vicky Pope has over 7 years production experience through her work as a Wellington based commercials producer. She has produced live-action and animated commercials and music videos shooting and delivering on both film and video. She has a broad background in post-production, 2D and 3D animation and VFX work.

Vicky spent 3 years as a Development Executive at the New Zealand Film Commission, NZ's government agency responsible for the development and financing of NZ film. She also undertook a 6 month internship with UK script development training agency ARISTA. She has worked closely with the emerging filmmaking community through a further role as the NZ film Commission's Short Film Fund Manager.

As a creative producer she is closely involved in all aspects of development. Her recent stop-motion animated short film *Life After Death* written and directed by Guy Capper and Jemaine Clement ('Flight of the Conchords') screened in the NZ International Film Festival in 2006. She is currently developing a number of short and feature length films including a black comedy *Two Little Boys* with NZ Director Robert Sarkies (*Out of the Blue* and *Scarflies*) as well as the psychological horror *Stench* based on the NZ novel by the same name by Mike Johnson.

CAST

Mr Tupaia	RAWIRI PARATENE
Lena	ALEX HUNTER
Dave	KIP CHAPMAN
PE Teacher	KIRSTIE O'SULLIVAN
Girls at Pool	NGAETU GROVER
Teachers	HOLLY DYER
	TRAVENA WHITE
	GILL POLLOCK

CREW

Director	CHRISTOPHER DUDMAN
Writer	PAUL STANLEY WARD
Producer	VICKY POPE
Casting Directors	SUZANNE MCALEER ADRIAN DENTICE
Production Manager	MONIQUE WILLIAMS
Production Assistant	ANDREW MARSHALL
Runner	PHIL KAIRE
1st Assistant Director	PAUL D GRINDER
2 nd Assistant Director	KATE FISHER
3rd Assistant Director	LUCY MUIR
Continuity	BELINDA SCHMID LYDIA SAKSHI
Director of Photography	GINNY LOANE
Focus Pullers	SIMON ROELANTS TODD BILTON
Clapper Loaders	JAMES RUA ABBY MOUNTER
Video Split	MEG PERROTT
Steadicam Operator	DALE McCREADY
Stills Photographer	SARA ORME

Production Designer	GRACE MOK
Props Buyer	MEGAN VERTELLE
Scenic Artist	GILES SMITH
Construction	TOM WOLF
Art Department Assistants	ADRIAN THOMPSON
	LUCY MUIR
	JACKSON MCARTHUR
Special Effects	GUNNER ASHFORD
Costume Designer	KIRSTY CAMERON
Costume Standby	CECILE BRIDGEFORD
Make Up Supervisor	KYLIE HARRIS
Make Up Assistant	NATALIE PERKS
Key Grip	PAUL STEVENSON
Grip Assistant	BJORN BURTON
Gaffer	PEZ ZEE
Best Boy	MIKE MCCAULAY
Lighting Assistants	JOE OLKKONEN
	JAMES LAINCHBURY
	BILLY LAWRY
	MARCEL CURLEY
Sound Recordists	DAVE HURLEY
	DAVID MADIGAN
Boom Operators	HUGO TICHBORNE
	MATT CUIRC
Location Scouts	LISA JUDD
	PETER VALENTINE
	RACHEL FOREMAN
Unit Manager	AMY RUSSO
Safety Supervisors	LIFEGUARD & SAFETY LTD
ANI Property Manager	COLIN HANNA-LATHAM
Catering	THE WILD WILD KITCHEN
Caterer	BJ BROWN
Extras Agencies	FRESH TALENT
	KAM TALENT
Editor	DAVID COULSON
Assistant Editor	JOE CLARKE
Offline Edit Facility	OKTOBOR

Supervising Sound Editor
Sound Editors

Foley Artist
Foley Recordist
Sound Mixer

Music Composition

Film Stock

Film Laboratory
Laboratory Post
Production Coordinator
Laboratory Liaison
DI Department
HD Colourist
Opticals
Colour Grader
Park Road Producer
Park Road Coordinator

Negative Matching
Rostrum Camera
Credit Design
Camera Equipment
Steadicam Rig
Lighting Equipment
Grip Equipment
Generator
Radios
Unit Equipment

Vehicle Rentals
Security
Crew Agency
Rushes Transport
Wellington Rushes Runner
Insurance

Additional Story

NZ Film Commission
Short Film Manager
Executive Producers

DAVE WHITEHEAD
MORGAN SAMUEL
MELANIE GRAHAM
MATTHEW STUTTER
ROBYN MCFARLANE
ANDY CUMMINS
JOHN BOSWELL

DAVID LONG

FUJI FILM

PARK ROAD POST PRODUCTION

PETER AMIES
ANDY WICKENS
JON NEWELL
AVID HOLLINGSWORTH
RIAN SCADDEN
YNNE REED
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ROBERT SARKIES
MAHONY TRENDALL & JACK

PAUL STANLEY WARD
and CHRISTOPHER DUDMAN

JULIETTE VEBER
NIK BEACHMAN
ANDREW BANCROFT

Produced in association with
The Short Film Fund of the New Zealand Film Commission
International sales by NZ Film www.nzfilm.co.nz

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