

The Man Who Couldn't Dance

Alge dreams of being a dancer.
The only thing standing in his way are his legs.
He doesn't have any.

Palm Springs International Film Festival, California 2005
Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival, Taiwan 2005
Just For Laughs Festival, Canada 2005

PRESSKIT



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

Kate Kennedy - NZ Film - PO Box 11 546 - Wellington - New Zealand
Tel +64 4 382 7686 - Fax +64 4 384 9719 - kate@nzfilm.co.nz

N E W Z E A L A N D F I L M

Essential Information

Writer/Director	Barry Prescott
Producer	Jan Haynes
Production Company	Strawberry Jan Films Ltd
Technical Information	Beta Sp / 1:1.85 / Dolby Digital
Running Time	10 minutes 35 seconds
Country of Production	New Zealand
Date of completion	January 2005
Genre	Black Comedy
Sales	Kate Kennedy, New Zealand Film Commission email kate@nzfilm.co.nz Tel: +64 4 382 7686

Log Line/ Short Synopsis

Alge dreams of being a dancer. The only thing standing in his way are his legs.
He doesn't have any.

Long Synopsis

Alge dreams of being a dancer. The only thing standing in his way is the fact that he has no legs. His sister Sue tries to keep his spirits up, but it is only after an embarrassing incident at Dancing for the Disabled that Alge faces up to the fact that his dream of dancing is over, until he dreams up an ingenious solution to his problem.

Don't have legs of your own? Hire some.

Alge advertises in the Classifieds for a Dancing Man. Using a harness that Sue has made, Alge will be strapped to the Dancing Man's front and they will dance as one.

The Dancing Man is a perturbed by this idea, but agrees. A beautiful suit completes the illusion that 2 men are one (albeit a 7 foot hunchback).

The day comes and Alge goes to Dancing for the Perfectly Normal and Healthy of the Community. Overcoming a few hurdles in the form of good looking men without someone else stuffed up their jacket, Alge convinces a young woman to dance. Despite his unusual appearance, he dances beautifully. Soon his partner's friends are cutting in to dance with this most unusual creature at the expense of the other men in the hall. Alge's dream of dancing has come true in spectacular fashion.

Director's Notes

This is a story about one man's crazy scheme to achieve his dreams.

The Man Who Couldn't Dance is an irreverent fusion of black comedy with the more slapstick elements of visual comedy. The story sets up a potentially dangerous premise - a comedy about a man with no legs, an amputee. As such, it may be thought that the audiences may feel too uncomfortable to laugh for fear of being non-politically correct. But this story is not a piss-take of amputees, rather an empowerment of anyone who ever dared to dream.

The idea is unashamedly absurd, but not so far fetched as to be unbelievable. Disabled people use gadgets and specially designed tools daily to enable them to do things that able-bodied people take for granted. Ever tried to peel a potato without hands? Pour a cup of tea without being able to see? Write a piece of music without being able to hear? All of these are possible. All of these are realities for many. I am particularly interested in the kind of storytelling where fantasy and reality can cross paths at a moment's notice. For a brief period of time the cinema screen becomes somebody else's imagination and you have been invited to look around. In this way, the best films exude a charm that is similar to a good bedtime story - intimate yet accessible and enjoyable on a number of levels. This is what I wanted to achieve with this film.

I think Joe has done a fantastic job. He was cast because he is the only double leg amputee in the country under 65 and so much of the film rides on his performance. He delivers an excellent debut.

Director's Bio – Barry Prescott

Barry Prescott is a 30 year old film maker from Wellington, New Zealand. Since graduating as one of the top students from South Seas Film and Television School in 1995 he has made 3 short films, 3 children and a bunch of plasticine characters that now litter the house by the sea where he lives with his wife and family. He is currently developing 3 feature film scripts, one animated, 2 with non-squishable actors and a television series.

One of 9 children, Barry has always been interested in telling stories, mainly about who ate the chocolate. He writes advertising copy and children's books and designs his own T-shirt slogans.

After graduating from film school, Barry made *Unfurnished Room for Rent (35mm 3 mins)*, a plasticine animation, to experiment with the technique. He fell in love with it. In 1998 he made the short film *James Bond Egg (U-matic 7 mins)* which came 2nd in competition at the Wellington Fringe Film Festival.

Prescott then spent 3 years in London seeing the world before returning to New Zealand to make *Bouncers (35mm, 6 mins)*. His second animation, this film was more ambitious with several very technically difficult shots required as well as a great deal of flying, running and breeding. The film has screened internationally and won Best Editing at the River City Film Festival 2003.

The Man Who Couldn't Dance marks his return to working with actors. After so long in the world of plasticine Barry is taking it slowly and only working with half an actor. Maybe next year a complete actor.

FILMOGRAPHY

Bouncers 2002/ 35mm / 6 minutes

James Bond Egg 1998/ U-matic/ 7 minutes

Unfurnished Room for Rent 1997 / 35mm/ 3 minutes

Festivals Screenings of Previous Films

Orinda Film Festival USA (*Bouncers*) September 2005

Foyle Film Festival Ireland (*Bouncers*) November 2003

River City Film Festival (*Bouncers*) September 2003

Los Angeles International Short Film Festival (*Bouncers*) September 2003

New Zealand International Film Festival (*Bouncers*) July 2003

Drifting Clouds Film Festival (*Bouncers*) February 2003

World Cinema Showcase (*Unfurnished Room*) April 1999

Wellington Fringe Film Festival (*James Bond Egg*) June 1998

Palm Springs International Short Film Festival (*Unfurnished Room*) July 1997

Wellington Fringe Film Festival (*Unfurnished Room*) June 1997

Seattle International Film Festival (*Unfurnished Room*) May 1997

Production Company: Strawberry Jan Films Ltd

This is the first production for Strawberry Jan Films. The name came about because we wanted something that reflected our personalities rather than just a detached business letterhead. Strawberry Jan Films is a construct of the names Barry and Jan and has a sense of fun about it that reflects the way we work. Making films is a serious business that takes itself way too seriously. We believe that it can be done to the highest level of professionalism while still being able to laugh at ourselves.

Producer: Jan Haynes

Jan has been in the New Zealand film and television industry for over 25 years. She has line-produced or produced several television dramas and series and three feature films and co-produced the international award winning mini-series the "Sound and the Silence". In Wellington she has produced for the Gibson Group the award winning "Duggan" and "The Strip" and most recently the critically acclaimed series "The Insiders Guide to Happiness."

KEY CAST

Joe Taylor as Alge

The character of Alge in *The Man Who Couldn't Dance* is Joe's first film role. Raised in the Bay of Plenty, Joe left home as a teen to work in horticulture on an Equestrian

Stud Farm, competing in 3 day eventing along the way. He then dairy farmed for several years before backpacking his way through China and Mongolia in the mid 90s where he spent several years working. Not long after returning to New Zealand Joe had an accident and lost both his legs. This has not stopped him from rock climbing, tandem parachuting, bungee jumping and horse riding.

He studied art in Wellington, and then a Bachelor of Computer Graphics & Design in Wanganui. Joe then set up a charitable low power radio station in Wanganui that caters for the older listener, playing songs from the early '60s and back to the early days of 78 speed record.

“After I was asked to act in this film and read the script, I thought the film was bogus and the director was mad! I was reassured that it was legit. “Well why not?” I thought. “What do I have to lose?”

“The most outstanding moment in the film for me was when I was standing in the lounge, watching my sister “Sue” sewing and the “Dancing Man” dancing with a sack of potatoes, laughing madly. My thoughts were “What on earth am I doing here, this is just too weird and surreal”.

John Bach as the Dancing Man

John Bach is one of New Zealand’s best know actors. He has starred in 29 movies and numerous television series since the mid 1970s. He has won Best Actor at the New Zealand film awards twice for his roles in *The Last Tattoo* (1994) and *Old Scores* (1991).

Born in Wales, John lives in New Zealand, but works internationally, often spending most of the year abroad on film sets. He is best known internationally for his role as Madril, Faramir’s lieutenant in the *Lord of the Rings*, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*. In New Zealand he is best known as Duggan, the eponymous policeman of the long running television series.

John loved the script’s “absurdity” and wanted to be involved. The role of the Dancing Man was a wonderful opportunity for John to showcase his comedic talents. Often cast in the role of the brooding hero, policeman or villain, John is little known for his comedy. He has wonderful timing and a gift for the silly. Director Barry Prescott says “John immediately ‘got’ the idea and was willing to make his character quite ridiculous - which was lucky as he hadn’t seen the lycra bodysuit at that stage.”

Emma Kinane as Sue

Born in England and teenaged in Tauranga, Emma graduated from NZ Drama School in 1988. Her dramatic roles include Gertrude in *Hamlet*, Zebrowski in *The Temptations of St Max*, and Violet in *Steaming*. Recently she feminised a classic role as “Miss” Aslaksen in Ibsen’s *An Enemy of the People*, which won the Chapman Tripp 2003 Production of the Year Award. She received the Evening Standard Best Actress of 1990 Award for her work as Ruth in Noel Coward’s *Blithe Spirit*.

Emma's TV credits include guest spots on *Coverstory*, *Ivanhoe (Dark Knight)*, *Freaky* and *Willy Nilly*. She has played small roles in short films, but Sue in *The Man Who Couldn't Dance* is her first lead in a short film.

Emma is also a talented singer and has played diverse roles in musicals such as *Lifelines*, *Aunt Daisy!*, *Shakers* and *Tomfoolery*. Emma's favourite singing role involved channelling various pop singers in a show called *Dead Tragic*.

Emma is married to Musical Director Michael Williams and home-educates their two children Barnaby and Claire.

Alice Fraser as Limbless Myrtle

Born in England, Alice began her career in radio and the theatre in the 1960s. In 1964 she began her television career, starring in the series "Crossroads". She has steadily worked in both England and New Zealand for 40 years, starring in several feature films and television series. She is missing neither an arm nor a foot.

Donna Akersten as the Ticket Lady

A doyen of the New Zealand theatre community, Donna has also starred in over a dozen films and numerous television series in her 30 year career. She also has numerous radio credits to her name.

Richard Bluck - Director of Photography

Richard is one of New Zealand's most experienced DOPs. He has a long career that spans feature films, commercials and television series. Recent credits include the Lord of the Rings Trilogy and King Kong.

John Harding – Production Designer

John has a background as a designer for the theatre. He has worked for WETA workshop for several years designing and creating props for the film industry. Recent credits include the Lord of the Rings Trilogy where he was the on set art director for WETA.

Eddie Raynor – Composer

Eddie is the keyboard genius and one of the founding members of Split Enz. As well as his 10 year career with the band, he has played as a session musician for the likes of Sir Paul McCartney, produced albums for many other bands and release his own solo albums.

CAST

Alge

JOE TAYLOR

Dancing Man

JOHN BACH

Sue

EMMA KINANE

Limbless Myrtle

ALICE FRASER

Ticket Lady

DONNA AKERSTEN

CREW

Written by

BARRY PRESCOTT

Directed by

BARRY PRESCOTT

Produced by

JAN HAYNES

Executive Producer

VANESSA ALEXANDER

Director of Photography

RICHARD BLUCK

Production Designer

JOHN HARDING

Costume Designer

GILLIE COXILL

Music Composer

EDDIE RAYNOR

Editor

JO PRIEST

Sound Mixer

MIKE HEDGES

**Production Manager
1st Assistant Director
2nd Assistant Director**

**SHIRLEY LANGDON
FIONA BARTLETT
JOHN ABERDEIN**

Location Sound

PAUL CHATTINGTON

Boom Operators

**TONY SPEARS
KYLE GRIFFITHS
JO FRASER**

Focus Pullers

**SIMON BYERS
DEAN MCCARROLL
MATT TUFFIN
ALEX BISHOP**

Clapper Loaders

**Gaffer
Best Boy
Lighting Assistants**

**MARK NEWNHAM
CRAIG FARRAND
MONIQUE LEATHER
RYAN O'DONNELL**

Key Grip

PAUL MURPHY

Grips	LUKE SAULBREY AARON RANGI DARREN BRADNOCK
Make Up Artist	JAIME LEIGH MCINTOSH
Design Assistants	DONNA PEARMAN JEFFREY GOLDFINCH IRIS LAMPRECHT
Props Standbys	ROGER EDWARDS SUKHITA LANGFORD
Costume assistant/Standby Pattern Maker Machinist	ZOE FOX DONNA JEFFERIS TRACEY OLIVER
Choreographer Stunt Coordinator Acting Coach	JOANNA MATSIS SAM WILLIAMS KARL PAYNE
Unit Managers	EMILY IRELAND JOSANNE STEEL NGARETA GASCOIGNE
Location Scout Runners	JONATHAN HAWKE KEN STRATTON KYLIE GAUDIN TRUDI STEEL
Catering	MINISTRY OF FOOD
Sound Design and Tracklay Foley Artists	PETER MILLS ROBYN MCFARLANE NIGEL SCOTT
CGI Artist Stills Titles and Subtitles Assistant Editor	ANDREW SHANKS HELEN MITCHELL MATT GILLON MARK HAWTHORNE
Online & Grade	OKTOBER
Laboratory Telecine General Manager Sound Manager	THE FILM UNIT THE FILM UNIT SUE THOMPSON JOHN NEILL
Camera Equipment	PANAVISION
Film Stock	KODAK
Lighting Equipment	FILM EQUIPMENT COMPANY

Insurance

AON RISK