

THE PAINTED LADY



Presskit

Official Selection
Cannes Film Festival Forum
2001

Official Selection 2000:

Tampere and Montreal Film Festivals



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Production Notes

Writer: Belinda Schmid
Director: Belinda Schmid
Producer: Nik Beachman
Production Company: Second Cine

Colour 15 minutes 35 mm 1:1.85 Dolby Stereo

Short Synopsis

A compassionate view into the nature of isolation, fear and madness, as a young girl tries to understand her mother's illness.

Synopsis

Five year old Charlie arrives home from school one afternoon to find her mother, Fay, in the throes of another one of her moods.

Charlie leaves her alone, but later that night Fay goes too far. Overcome by a delusional paranoia, she forces Charlie to runaway with her. The next day Fay disappears, and Charlie is discovered by police who take her to a children's home. In her visits to the hospital Charlie observes her mother's gradual decline into psychosis. Charlie understands that she is alone and must learn to fend for herself.

The Producer

Nik Beachman is a professional film production manager and assistant director, who has recently began producing TV commercials. **The Painted Lady** is his first project as producer.

The Director

Belinda Schmid is a New Zealander, who completed her tertiary education in the USA and has recently returned to New Zealand to live and work. She was among the top graduates of New York University filmschool, and later enrolled in the highly selective MFA Directing Program at the American Film Institute.

Her NYU graduate thesis film **Outskirts** was selected for the Young Filmmakers' section at the Venice Film Festival, and was recipient of the Martin Scorsese Post Production Award, and the Warner Brothers Post Production Award. **The Painted Lady** is her first post-student project.

Credits

Cast

Charlie

Elizabeth Morris

Fay

Jennifer Ward-Lealand

Miss Robbins

Donogh Rees

Psych Nurse

John Stubbs

Policeman

Michael Lawrence

Social Worker

Mike Dwyer

Mean Girl

Katie Fisher

Cat

Stumpy

Crew

Director

Belinda Schmid

Writer

Belinda Schmid

Producer

Nik Beachman

Director of Photography

Aaron Morton

1st Assistant Director

Hamish McFarlane

2nd Assistant Director

Laura Fong

Art Director

Kezia Barnett

Editor

Brian Shaw

Composer

Don McGlashan

Sound Designer

Dick Reade

Wardrobe

Jasmine Edgar

Camera Assistants

Rachael Beard, Gaysorn Thavatt,
George Henna and Frith Locke-
Bonney

Crew cont...

Art Dept Assistants

Helena Brooks, Yael Trelease,
Philipa King, Emily Buchanan
and Lucy Bowey

Production Assistant

April Smith

Continuity

Raj Sethi

Makeup Artist

Katherine M'Guire

Gaffer

Greg Riwai

Lighting Assistant

James Gray

Grips

Dean Maxtead, Jay Munro, Ollie Harris
and Garry Illingworth

Sound Recordist

Wendy Adams

Boom Operator

Jo Fraser

Assistant Editor

Grant Kronfeld

Animal Wrangler

Animals on Q

Tutor

Maya Dalziel

Chaperones

Charlie and Carol Morris

Casting Assistant

Kristina Simons

Caterer

Kentus Maximus

Paintings Courtesy of

Willie @ Koia

Vehicles

Henderson Rentals

Props

First Scene, Hollywood Props

Camera & Lenses

Panavision NZ

Laboratory

The Film Unit

Post Production

Images Post

Director's Notes

Sensitivity to a child's plight is something I've always respected in French Cinema, particularly in Truffaut's and Bresson's work, and more recently a film called **Ponette** by Alain Arde reminded me how much farther into the child's subjective world the French explore. With **The Painted Lady** my main intention was to illustrate how we respond to situations as children partly by accepting and dealing with them without emotional upset because we have no other measure for the ways things are supposed to be, and partly by coping in ways that help us survive at the time, but which later may turn out to be even more detrimental to our existence.

In the casting process I found that the character, though initially written as a seven or eight year old, actually needed to be played by someone closer to four or five. Because in the older children I auditioned I saw a tendency in them to indicate the feelings they believed the character would be experiencing, and exaggerating those feelings in order to illicit pity or sympathy. This was precisely what I did not want the character to do. I felt that if the film in any way appeared to try to project or illicit emotions, the audience would immediately be distanced. What struck me by Lizzie, when I first saw her perform in one of her acting classes, was that she was totally involved in the world of her character and everyone everything else in the room vanished. She was unconcerned with the attention, and was completely engrossed in the magic of make-believe. She was also a lot younger

than I was casting at the time, but she was obviously the more appropriate age for the part. It took some convincing to persuade my producer that she would be able to handle the physical demands of the shoot.

Quickly into the rehearsal process it was also apparent to me that Lizzie was bringing something to the role that I had not bargained for when I cast her, herself. Up until that point I had assumed that the challenge would lie in merely getting a believable performance from a child. I never imagined that the actor playing Charlie would actually contribute another layer to the role, on top of what I'd written, but Lizzie did. There is a layer of toughness to Charlie, which masks and at times reveals her vulnerability, which is there because Lizzie decided that she needed a defence against some of the blows she was being dealt in the story. It was something we never discussed, but once I saw it in none of the earlier rehearsals it made perfect sense.

I think that what I found most exciting and rewarding about making this film, was the process of working with someone so young, and the discovery that it is possible to collaborate with children at a level which is equally as complex and meaningful as working with adult actors and themes. What I like about the child's world also, is that it is a world which, for the most part, survives without words, and without a voice, but with a range of experience and emotions which need to be expressed. It has been an honour of sorts to be able to