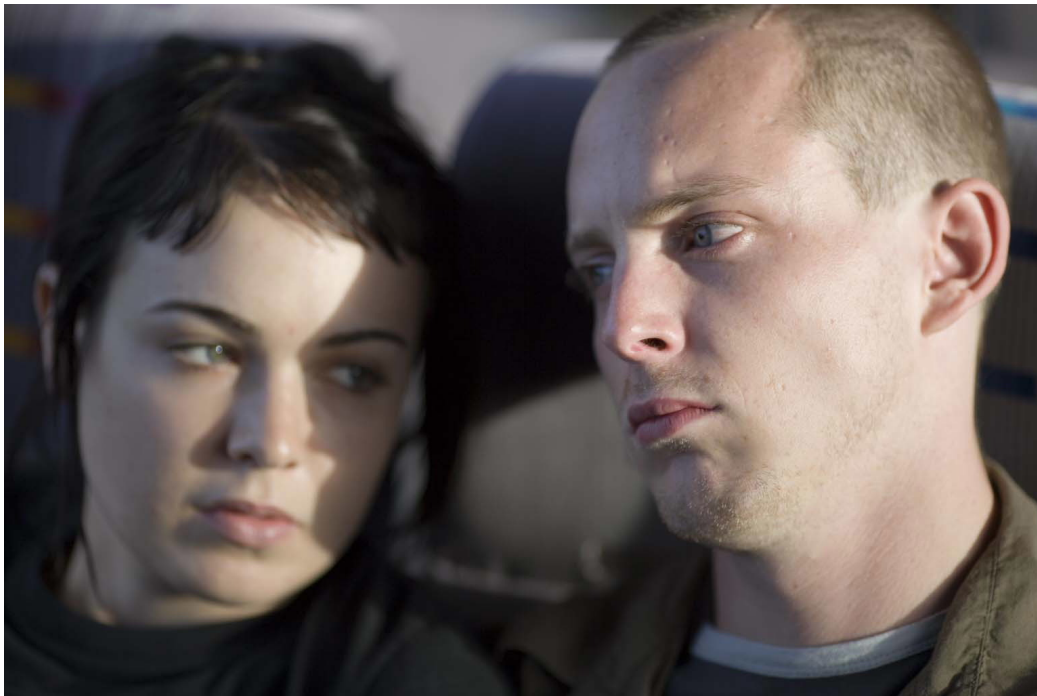


# WE THE LIVING

Written and Directed by David Rittey  
Produced by Amanda Jenkins

## PRESS KIT



What becomes of those who remain?

**Starring Emily Barclay (*Suburban Mayhem, In My Father's Den*) and  
Tom Budge (*The Proposition*)**

### INTERNATIONAL SALES

Juliette Veber, New Zealand Film Commission  
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# WE THE LIVING

## PRODUCTION NOTES

DIRECTOR David Rittey  
PRODUCER Amanda Jenkins  
PRODUCTION COMPANY AJ FILMS Ltd

35mm      Dolby Digital      Colour      13.00mins      1:1.85

## FILM FESTIVAL SCREENINGS

2006 MIC Homegrown Film Festival, New Zealand  
2006 Telecom New Zealand International Film Festival, New Zealand  
2006 Melbourne International Film Festival, Australia  
2007 Show Me Shorts Film Festival, New Zealand

## TAG LINE

What becomes of those who remain?

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

In a rural camping ground, a young woman, Freya, discovers the lifeless body of a fellow traveler. To find comfort, she seeks out Jay. Safe, in the cocoon of his tent, Jay shares with her a story from his past; a story that helps to bring her own feelings sharply in to focus.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

A nineteen-year-old girl, Freya, is camping at a rural backpackers alone. We know nothing from her past or what might have brought her here. As she slowly wakes up from a dream, warm daylight filters through the half open zipper of the tent she has been sleeping in. She crawls out of her tent, ties her hair back and takes a moment to feel the warmth of the sun on her face. She seems peaceful.

Freya makes her way to the main house. We see other young people hanging around together. As she gets closer to the house she sees Jay. Freya stops and keeps her distance, as Jay sees her approaching. Freya seems hesitant to walk towards him. They both look at each other for what seems to be an extended moment. There is clearly a history between Freya and Jay, but we can only guess at what this might be.

Instead of continuing toward the house, Freya changes direction and walks away. She clearly wants to avoid Jay. She then continues to walk alone through the rambling property. She continues down a quiet track and towards a cluster of trees.

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Within the trees, suddenly, Freya finds something that will change her forever: A young man is hanging from a tree. He has been there since the night before, and Freya is the first person to find the body. Freya stands motionless, unable to move. Eventually she manages to avert her stare.

Freya walks away, head down. Now a safe distance away, she stops and looks back over her shoulder. She can't believe what she has just seen, but the image of the hanging body remains imprinted in her mind. Freya makes her way to the swimming hole, a place where other travellers frequently gather. As she gets closer, she stops and observes a group of young people swimming and having fun. Freya needs to tell someone what she has found. She needs someone to help her, however, she hesitates before doing so. She can't bring herself to do it, and for a moment at least, she holds on to the awful knowledge of what has happened. By telling others, she knows that everything will change. Again she notices Jay sitting with the others next to the swimming hole.

Later, now that the news of what has happened has spread around, we see young travellers sitting together at the main house, talking, with serious faces, and exchanging information about the person who died. People want to know who he was and where he came from. We can now see a dramatic change in mood around the backpackers.

Freya sits alone with her thoughts. She stays away from the others. They all know that she was the one who found the body. People have been looking at her and talking about her. We see other people upset and comforting one another. For Freya, this is an outward reflection of what she desperately yearns for. However, unable to deal with her emotions, she has shut down. She seems remote and detached.

Freya makes a coffee and sits alone in the kitchen. One of the other travellers, Sonja, approaches her. She asks Freya if she knew the person who died. Freya answers "no". Sonja then asks about what Freya saw that morning, and what the body looked like. Freya filters through the images in her head, but isn't able to answer. She can detect a tone of morbid fascination in Sonja's voice. This pushes Freya further away. An awkward silence. Freya now feels more alone than ever.

Freya walks away from the main house. She goes in search of Jay. She continues through long grass and past clusters of trees.

At the far end of the property, there is one remote tent on its own. Freya hesitates for a moment before approaching. She is not sure if Jay will accept her, and she knows that she wouldn't normally have had the courage to go to his tent.

Now safe, in the cocoon of Jay's tent, Jay shares with Freya a story from his past; a story that helps to bring her own feelings sharply in to focus. Through listening to his story, Freya finds a deeper understanding and empathy

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## LONG SYNOPSIS cont...

towards Jay, and at the same time this enables her to access her own deeply buried emotions. At this point, Freya finally manages to access the emotional and spiritual connection that she has been yearning for, for so long. Due to their mutual understanding, Freya and Jay connect with each other on a deep and authentic level.

Freya and Jay leave the campground together. As they sit together on a traveling bus, Freya looks around at some of the other people on the bus, people who are in the midst of life, oblivious to the day's events. Each face tells its own story: A mother comforts her tired daughter, An older Maori woman sits alone deep in thought, a young man with headphones on stares out the window. Now with an altered perspective, Freya watches through new eyes.

Freya and Jay sit closely together with fingers interlocked. Jay gently squeezes Freya's hand. Together, they have emerged changed.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

On the surface, We The Living is a simple story. Just below the surface however, lie more intangible and complex human emotions. The story manages to touch upon a state of being that can be fleeting and hard to grasp: A feeling, or state of awareness, that can sometimes arise after experiencing loss, or surviving a traumatic event.

Sometimes tragic events can open up a place of stillness and give us a greater understanding of life. In this state, everyday worries suddenly seem trivial, and the things that truly matter come into focus. I have experienced this feeling on a small number of occasions; have tried to hang on to it, but inevitably it fades. I think that perhaps this feeling arises when we are reminded of our own mortality, and due to this reminder, we feel truly alive.

In developing the script, I was intentionally trying to keep certain elements of the story mysterious. The intention is to keep the audience intrigued and to lend the story and it's characters a greater depth beyond the parameters of the cinema screen.

This is a story about mortality, loss, empathy, and relationships that are difficult to name.

Having said this, the core story is simple, uncluttered, and easy to relate to. At its heart, this is a story about a relationship and a meaningful connection between two people. The setting of the campground and the transitory nature of young travellers make this particular human connection quite a rare and special thing. Both characters come from quite different backgrounds, but due to the day's events, they connect on a deep and authentic level.

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The death that Freya encounters is not the central focus of the film. Rather, it acts as a catalyst for Freya by causing her to seek out Jay; something that she may not have otherwise done. It makes her connection with Jay possible. By introducing dark elements into the film, these elements help to clearly identify a sense of real beauty and hope towards the end of the film. So, with that in mind, I see this as a film about life rather than a film about death.

## DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

David Rittey was raised in Christchurch, New Zealand, has lived in Melbourne, Australia and London, UK. He is currently living in Auckland, New Zealand.

David's first introduction to film making was at the University of Canterbury where he graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in 1996. He initially went to art school to pursue painting and sculpture but soon found himself drawn to the film department.

In 2000 David attended the Victorian College of the Arts School of Film and Television in Melbourne Australia where he completed a Post Graduate Degree in narrative film. His graduating film, *Out of Darkness*, received international acclaim and won many awards as it made its way around the festival circuit.

In 2003 David received funding from the New Zealand Film Commission's short film fund for *CLOSER*.

For its world premier, *Closer* was selected to screen in competition at the Cannes International Film Festival in May 2004. *Closer* was one of nine international films nominated for the prestigious Palm d'Or.

Since Cannes, *Closer* has been selected for numerous film festivals including the Melbourne International Film Festival, the New Zealand International Film Festival, Palm Springs International Film Festival, Vancouver International Film Festival, St Tropez International Film Festival, Sao Paulo International Film Festival.

*Closer* also won Best Short Film as well as Best Performance in a Short Film (Toby Agnew) at the New Zealand Film and Television Awards 2005.

In 2005, David received production funding from the New Zealand Film Commission for *WE THE LIVING*.

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## PRODUCER'S BIOGRAPHY

AMANDA JENKINS has been passionate about filmmaking and filmmakers since discovering the film department at Canterbury University 15 years ago. While completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film she was instrumental in encouraging New Zealand short filmmakers, directing the first competitive Short Film Festival in New Zealand.

Since then, for the past 15 years, she has worked on a number of short films, television programmes, feature films and advertising commercials. Producing on location advertising campaigns for television and print has lead her to work in Australia, Africa and America as well as New Zealand.

Four years ago Amanda set up AJ FILMS LIMITED. Based in the South Island of New Zealand AJ FILMS supports and facilitates national and international commercial productions while filming on location in New Zealand.

We the Living is the third short film Amanda has produced for the New Zealand Film Commission and the second film to be produced under the umbrella of AJ FILMS. Amanda is enthusiastic about the New Zealand screen industry and in her support of emerging filmmakers. "It is a real privilege to be part of the creative filmmaking process, to realise a script to the screen. New Zealand has a wealth of talent and experience with cast and crew, and it is important to nurture that through short film."

AJ FILMS is committed to developing additional film projects that tell Strong New Zealand Stories.

# WE THE LIVING

## CAST AND CREW

### CAST

FREYA Emily Barclay

JAY Tom Budge

SONJA Bonnie Soper

### CREW

DOP Ginny Loane

EDITORS Jonno Woodford-Robinson

Paul Maxwell

SOUND DESIGN Tim Prebble

MUSIC COMPOSER Art of Fighting

DIRECTOR David Rittey

PRODUCER Amanda Jenkins

1st AD Sarah Milne

2nd AD Jonny Kennerley

PRODUCTION MANAGER Kat Stephens

PRODUCTION RUNNER Mike Ramirez

CONTINUITY Kelly Billing

UNIT MANAGER Tommy Collins

Pat Walker

FOCUS PULLER Andrew McGeorge

CLAPPER LOADER Francois Lategan

VIDEO SPLIT OPERATOR Denise Faust

Nicole Colmar

GAFFER/GRIP Pablo Stevenson

LIGHTING ASSISTANTS Greg Parker

Chris Carthy

David Hammond

GRIP ASSISTANT Pez Zee

GENERATOR OPERATOR Nick Riini

ART DIRECTOR Nick Connor

STANDBY PROPS Bryony Mathews

ART DEPARTMENT ASSIST Phil Hinnot

Rob Vickers

SOUND RECORDIST Fraser Satherley

BOOM OPERATOR Mark Messenger

WARDROBE Nikki Jenkinson

MAKEUP ARTIST Rachel Johansen

STILLS PHOTOGRAPHER Chris Lewis

# WE THE LIVING

STOCK Kodak  
CAMERA SUPPLIED BY Silverscreen Productions  
DEED WRANGLER Animals on Q  
CASTING AGENT WELLINGTON Rachel Bullock Casting  
CASTING DIRECTOR Christina Asher  
CASTING COORDINATOR Georgina Ellis

POST PRODUCTION COORDINATOR Rachel Trillo  
POST PRODUCTION SOUND Parkroad Post  
SOUND DESIGNER Tim Prebble  
DIAGLOGUE EDITOR Chris Todd  
PROCESSING LABORATORY The Film Unit  
EDITING FACILITIES Exposure  
POST PRODUCTION The Film Unit

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS Short Intercept  
Nik Beachman  
Andrew Bancroft  
Hone Kouka