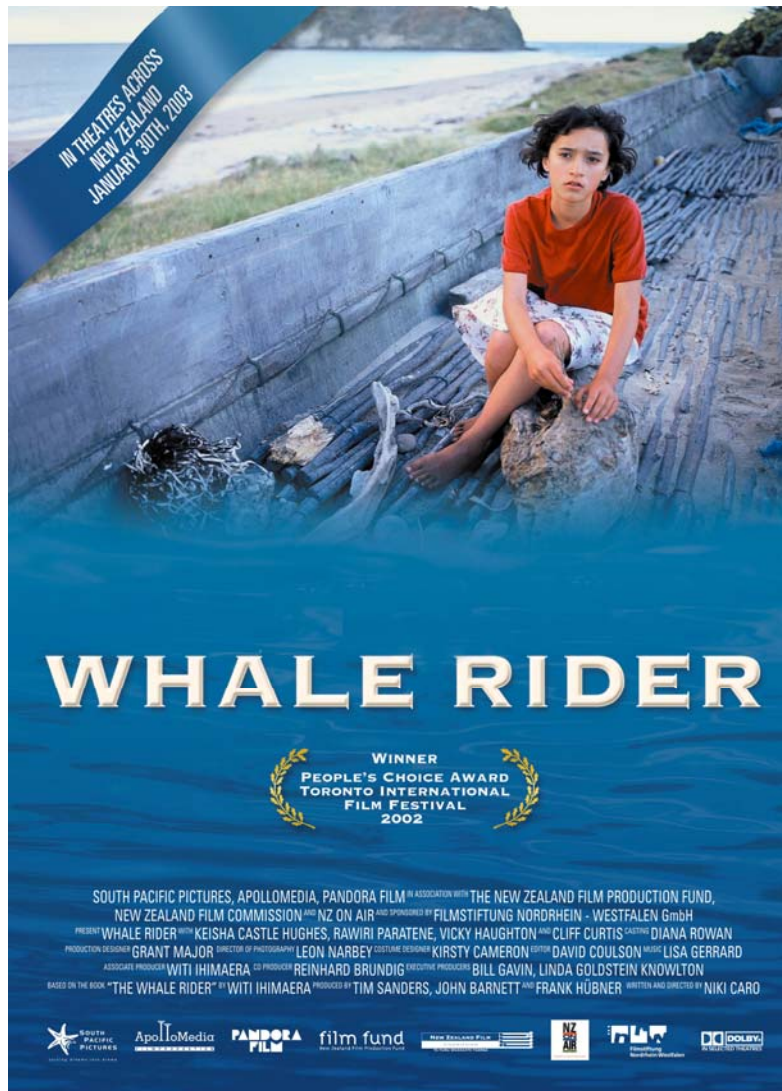


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Awards

Nominations:

- **Nominee, Best Actress in a Leading Role**
76th Academy Awards
- **Nominee, Best Supporting Actress**
2004 Screen Actors' Guild Awards
- **Nominee, Best Motion Picture, Drama**
Nominee, Best Director
Nominee, Best Adapted Screenplay
Nominee, Best Art Direction and Production Design
2004 Golden Satellite Awards
- **Nominee, Outstanding Actress in a Motion Picture**
Nominee, Outstanding Motion Picture
2004 NAACP Image Awards

Awards:

- **Winner, Best Foreign Film**
2004 Independent Spirit Awards
- **Winner, Most Promising Performer**
2003 Chicago Film Critics
- **Winner, Best Young Actress; Best Family Film**
2003 Critics' Choice Awards, American Broadcast Critics' Association
- **Winner, Best Breakthrough Performance**
2003 South Eastern Film Critics' Association (USA)
- **Winner, Best Breakthrough Filmmaker; Best Breakthrough Performance**
2003 Online Film Critics' Society (USA)
- **Winner, Best Actress**
2003 Washington DC Area Film Critics

Awards continued

- **Winner, Best Film**
Winner, Best Director
Winner, Best Screenplay
Winner, Best Actress
Winner, Best Supporting Actress
Winner, Best Supporting Actor
Winner, Best Juvenile Performer
Winner, Best Costume Design
Winner, Best Original Music
2003 NZ Film Awards
- **Winner, Best Film**
2003 BAFTA Children's Television and Film Awards, London
- **Winner, Best Feature Film**
2003 Environmental Media Awards, Los Angeles
- **Winner, Best Original Song Composed for Feature Film, Telemovie, TV Series or Mini-Series**
2003 APRA-AGSC Screen Music Awards
- **Winner, Jury Prize**
2003 Sao Paulo International Film Festival
- **Winner, 2003 Humanitas Award - Sundance Feature Film Category**
Niki Caro: Screenwriter
- **Winner, 2003 Audience Award**
Lake Placid Film Festival
- **Winner, 2003 Audience Award Best Dramatic Feature**
Maui International Film Festival
- **Winner, 2003 Golden Space Needle Award for Best Film**
Winner, 2003 Golden Space Needle Award for Best Director
Seattle International Film Festival
- **Winner, 2003 VirginMega Audience Award for Best Narrative Feature**
San Francisco International Film Festival
- **Winner, 2003 Canal+ Audience Award**
Rotterdam International Film Festival
- **Winner, 2003 World Cinema Audience Award**
Sundance International Film Festival (USA)
- **Winner: 2002 AGF People's Choice Award**
Toronto International Film Festival
- **Official Section:**
2002 San Sebastian International Film Festival

**South Pacific Pictures
ApolloMedia
Pandora Film**

in association with

**The New Zealand Film Production Fund
The New Zealand Film Commission
NZ On Air**

and sponsored by Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen GmbH

present

WHALE RIDER

**Keisha Castle-Hughes
Rawiri Paratene
Vicky Haughton
Cliff Curtis**

Casting Diana Rowan

Production Designer Grant Major

Director of Photography Leon Narbey

Costume Designer Kirsty Cameron

Editor David Coulson

Music Lisa Gerrard

Associate Producer Witi Ihimaera

Co-Producer Reinhard Brundig

Executive Producers Bill Gavin
Linda Goldstein Knowlton

Based on the book *'The Whale Rider'* by Witi Ihimaera

Produced by Tim Sanders, John Barnett and Frank Hubner

Written and Directed by Niki Caro

CAST LIST

Paikea	Keisha Castle-Hughes
Koro	Rawiri Paratene
Flowers	Vicky Haughton
Porourangi	Cliff Curtis
Rawiri	Grant Roa
Hemi	Mana Taumaunu
Jake	Tyronne White
Ropata	Taupuru Whakataka-Brightwell
Wiremu	Tenia McClutchie-Mita
Shilo	Rachel House
Dog	Taungaroa Emile
Willie	Tammy Davis
Maka	Mabel Wharekawa-Burt
Miro	Rawinia Clarke
Miss Parata	Tahei Simpson
Baby Paikea	Aomuri Parata-Haua
Rewi	Roimata Taimana
Rehua	Elizabeth Skeen
Driver	Pura Tangira
Doctor	John Sumner
Young Rawiri	Sam Woods
Rehua's Aunty	Keriana Thomson
Wananga Boys:	
Bubba	Peter Patuwai
Parekura	Rutene Spooner
Maui	Riccardo Davis
Henare	Apiata Whangapirita-Apanui
Fisherman	Heemi Taumaunu
Paikea stand-in	Waiotemarama (Waio) Parata-Haua

SYNOPSIS

**A contemporary story of love and rejection
as a young girl fights to fulfil her destiny.**

SHORT SYNOPSIS

In a small New Zealand coastal village, Maori claim descent from Paieka, the Whale Rider. In every generation, a male heir has succeeded to the chiefly title. The time is now. When twins are born, and the boy twin dies, the chief is unable to accept his grand-daughter, Pai, as a future leader.

Koro, the chief, is convinced that the the tribe's misfortunes began at Pai's birth and calls for his people to bring their sons to him, sure a new leader will be revealed.

Pai loves Koro more than anyone in the world, but she must fight him and a thousand years of tradition to fulfil her destiny.

LONG SYNOPSIS

In a small New Zealand coastal village, Maori claim descent from Paikea, the Whale Rider. In every generation for more than 1000 years, a male heir born to the Chief succeeds to the title.

The time is now. The Chief's eldest son, Porourangi, fathers twins – a boy and a girl. But the boy and his mother die in childbirth. The surviving girl is named Pai.

Grief-stricken, her father leaves her to be raised by her grandparents. Koro, her grandfather who is the Chief, refuses to acknowledge Pai as the inheritor of the tradition and claims she is of no use to him. But her grandmother, Flowers, sees more than a broken line, she sees a child in desperate need of love.

And Koro learns to love the child. When Pai's father, Porourangi, now a feted international artist, returns home after twelve years, Koro hopes everything is resolved and Porourangi will to accept destiny and become his successor.

But Porourangi has no intention of becoming Chief. He has moved away from his people both physically and emotionally. After a bitter argument with Koro he leaves, suggesting to Pai that she come with him. She starts the journey but quickly returns, claiming her grandfather needs her.

Koro is blinded by prejudice and even Flowers cannot convince him that Pai is the natural heir. The old Chief is convinced that the tribe's misfortunes began at Pai's birth and calls for his people to bring their 12-year-old boys to him for training. He is certain that through a gruelling process of teaching the ancient chants, tribal lore and warrior techniques, the future leader of their tribe will be revealed to him.

Meanwhile, deep within the ocean, a massive herd of whales is responding, drawn towards Pai and their twin destinies.

When the whales become stranded on the beach, Koro is sure this signals an apocalyptic end to his tribe. Until one person prepares to make the ultimate sacrifice to save the people. The Whale Rider.

GLOSSARY

Te Reo	<i>Maori language</i>
Kaumatua	<i>Elder</i>
Rangatira	<i>Chief</i>
Whareniui	<i>Meeting house</i>
Tikanga	<i>Customs</i>
Whakapapa	<i>Genealogy</i>
Tapu	<i>Sacred</i>
Waka	<i>Canoe</i>
Haka	<i>Dance</i>
Karanga	<i>Call</i>
Karakia	<i>Prayer</i>
Taiaha	<i>Fighting stick</i>
Mau rakau	<i>Stick fighting</i>
Moko/Mokopuna	<i>Grandchild</i>
Marae	<i>Meeting place</i>

WHALE RIDER is produced for SOUTH PACIFIC PICTURES by BAFTA winner TIM SANDERS (*The Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring, The Frighteners*); JOHN BARNETT (*What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?*) and FRANK HÜBNER (*The Musketeer, FearDotCom*) of ApolloMedia, Germany. Executive Producers are BILL GAVIN (*What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?*) and LINDA GOLDSTEIN KNOWLTON (*The Shipping News*). Author WITI IHIMAERA is also Associate Producer.

WHALE RIDER has a budget of around NZ\$10 million and is produced by SOUTH PACIFIC PICTURES, APOLLOMEDIA & PANDORA FILM in association with the NEW ZEALAND FILM PRODUCTION FUND, the NEW ZEALAND FILM COMMISSION and NZ ON AIR and is sponsored by FILMSTIFTUNG NORDRHEIN-WESTFALIN GmbH.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

A contemporary story of love, rejection and triumph as a young girl fights to fulfil her destiny, WHALE RIDER is directed by NIKI CARO (*Memory and Desire*) who adapted it for the screen from the novel by award-winning New Zealand writer WITI IHIMAERA (*The Matriarch, Tangi*).

Ihimaera was inspired to write WHALE RIDER in 1985 while living in an apartment in New York overlooking the Hudson River. “I heard helicopters whirling around and the ships in the river using all their sirens – a whale had come up the Hudson River and was spouting,” he recalls. “It made me think of my home town, Whangara and the whale mythology of that area.”

New Zealand’s indigenous Maori say that their ancestors came to New Zealand on a canoe. The people in Whangara and the East Coast believe their ancestor, Paikea, came on the back of a whale. The whale rescued him when his canoe over-turned.

Ihimaera had taken his daughters to a number of action movies, and they had asked him why in all of those movies the boy was the hero and the girl was the one who was helpless. “So I decided to write a novel in which the girl is the hero and I finished WHALE RIDER in three weeks.”

When Producer JOHN BARNETT read the book he was struck by the universality of the story when he first read it 10 years ago. “I think one of the most exciting things about WHALE RIDER is its international resonance - the themes are relevant in all sorts of societies and cultures throughout the world,” he says. “

The rights to the novel were optioned, but it wasn’t until 1995, when he re-optioned it at SOUTH PACIFIC PICTURES that WHALE RIDER went into development.

He says finding the crucial combination of right director and script took time, as did finding the money for what is essentially a very expensive film for New Zealand.

“We were looking for someone who could make a film which would capture the magic. We wanted go with a New Zealand director, and we approached NIKI CARO.

She'd made one feature film prior to that, some quite outstanding short films and she'd also done a lot of television work with South Pacific Pictures.

"When we approached her we asked her to do a script pass to show her vision for the film and it was really quite startling. What she did was so fantastic we resolved to stay with her and offered her the opportunity to direct the film."

"Niki created a marvellous transformation," agrees Witi Ihimaera. "And she updated the story so that it is very relevant beyond the year 2002. It's not just about a community that is faced with a particular problem of ancestry and succession, it's also about women and how they need to find and make their own way in society. Pai has become this iconic young girl who is desperately trying to seek her own sovereignty and her own destiny in a male-orientated world."

"I approached the adaptation from the point of view of somebody who was once a 12-year-old girl," Caro explains. "I asked a lot of questions of the story culturally and was very, very open to not imposing my will on it. I felt I needed to serve the story and that's been my ethic throughout the filmmaking process. I talked and talked and talked and listened and listened and listened and when I didn't understand something I had people I could go and speak to, which was lucky."

BAFTA winning Producer TIM SANDERS (*Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring*) came on board in 2000. "Tim's had a long experience in the film industry in production and from his work on *Lord of the Rings* he knew a lot about special effects and the logistics of big pictures, so he's been a very valuable member of the team," says Barnett.

WHALE RIDER is the first film to be produced with investment from the New Zealand Film Production Fund, established by the New Zealand Government in 2000 to support the production of New Zealand films on a larger scale.

"This is an expensive project by New Zealand standards and is an amalgam of local and foreign funding," explains Barnett. "Executive Producer, BILL GAVIN, had dealt with PANDORA before and was able to bring them into the project. Their enthusiasm was key to raising the finance, and bringing APOLLOMEDIA onboard. In addition to the Film Fund, the NEW ZEALAND FILM COMMISSION and NZ ON AIR also contributed."

The next enormous task was to cast the lead role of Pai. “I didn’t want a child actor, I wanted a real child,” recalls director Niki Caro. “I knew that I was looking not for ‘a’ girl that could do it, I was looking for ‘the’ girl. She didn’t have to look a certain way, she didn’t have to be a certain age, although she needed to be pre-pubescent, but we were looking for a special child. DIANA ROWAN was the casting director and one of the most important people on this film. She has established a reputation for casting children which is without peer, Anna Paquin (“The Piano”) being the obvious example. “

Rowan saw 10,000 children from numerous schools before narrowing it down to twelve. “We then brought them into a workshop situation,” says Caro. “KEISHA CASTLE-HUGHES just shone. She’s an astonishing actor. She’s the heart of our film and she’s a gift. I can’t imagine trying to make it with anybody other than her.”

“The whole cast is terrific,” adds Barnett. “RAWIRI PARATENE (Koro) and VICKY HAUGHTON (Flowers) have done fantastic jobs. They are both very experienced actors within the New Zealand film and television industry.”

The production was also thrilled to secure internationally-acclaimed actor CLIFF CURTIS (*Collateral Damage*, *Training Day*, *Three Kings*, *Blow*) for the role of Porourangi. “During the whole time I’d been involved in the picture I’d seen Cliff Curtis as Porourangi,” says Barnett. “He’s recently been playing a lot of non-Maori roles so I think he was excited at this opportunity.”

“There’s not a single actor on this film that has held back and that’s the way this film had to be,” says Caro. “That’s what makes for some very rare and compelling performances.”

“I needed to understand what leadership is,” says Caro. “And as the leader of this film, as the director, I understand that leadership is not about shouting and screaming. It’s about being the person that serves the rest and creates an environment in which people feel encouraged to do their best work.”

This applied not just to the cast, but also the crew. “The creative team that have been working on the picture are really quite outstanding,” says Barnett. “It’s fantastic when you get a group of people together who have the experience, the passion and the ability to turn something like this into the picture that it is. NIKI CARO, then LEON NARBAY [The Price of Milk] as Director of Photography, GRANT MAJOR (nominated for an Oscar for his art direction on *Lord of the Rings*) as Production Designer, DAVID COULSON [*Broken English*] as Editor and LISA GERRARD, who won a Golden Globe for her work on *Gladiator* and was a Golden Globe nominee for her work on *Ali*, and *The Insider*, as composer.

The final hurdle was deciding where to shoot the film. “This novel was set in Whangara and it would almost have been heresy to shoot anywhere else,” says Producer John Barnett. “There are physical things that are described in the book – the sweep of the bay, the island that looks like a whale, the meeting houses, and of course, the people whose legend we were telling. If we’d gone somewhere else and tried to manufacture the surroundings and the ambience, then I think it would have been noticeable in the picture.”

“Our key concern was naturalism,” explains Narbey. “We wanted it to look almost unlit. But that can never be – you need light, you need big reflectors and dealing with the darker complexion of the Maori people, you need even more light.”

Although very little needed to be done to the township, one of the design team’s biggest challenges was to build a 60-foot waka (canoe).

“I think it took about 12 weeks from the time we first started until the time it got down here,” says Major. “We had to build it in two halves in order to transport it from Auckland!”

“When we finished the film we gifted the waka to Whangara because for a long time they were building a canoe there and for all sorts of reasons it didn’t happen,” explains John Barnett. “It’s a living memory of what we were doing there, what their story is and how they participated.”

“Working at Whangara has had a whole lot of benefits including the ability to use the local people in our background cast and extras,” adds Sanders. “Many of the people in smaller roles and our extras are actually locals – untrained, but of course very familiar with the Paikea legend and with their surroundings here.”

ABOUT THE CAST

KEISHA CASTLE-HUGHES - Pai

"I was just speechless, I didn't know what to say," Keisha Castle-Hughes recalls of the moment she discovered she'd got the role of Pai. "About two hours later I was running around the hotel just screaming. I was so overwhelmed!"

Despite no previous acting experience, Keisha was chosen from thousands of girls in an extensive school-wide search. She had always dreamt of becoming an actor. WHALE RIDER is Keisha's first role.

Eleven years old at the time of filming, Keisha had assistance from director Niki Caro and tutor/chaperone Stephanie Wilkin. "Stef and Niki showed me how to find my feelings and how to talk properly. Then after a couple of weeks I just fell into the character. I didn't need to look back on anything because I could feel the character so much."

She describes Pai as "very brave. Her life has been pretty sad for the past 11 years because although she's the first-born she's a girl and the tradition required a boy. This makes Koro, her grandfather, sad, but she loves him no matter how much he dislikes her, she loves him. And she'll do anything to make him happy."

"Keisha has an amazing ability to focus," says director Niki Caro. "Her depth was immediately apparent. I rehearse as much as I can with actors and very intensively in pre-production. Keisha did some amazing work in that rehearsal period and has built and built on that. She's amazing."

"Keisha's performance never fails to move," agrees Producer Tim Sanders. "She plays the role with an emotional sincerity that is extremely rare in one so young. She has a natural talent and an absolute ability to wring emotion from her scenes and a true commitment to the role. "

"I think Keisha is a star, she's got a great future," adds Producer John Barnett. "For somebody who's never acted before, the maturity and the emotion that she brings to this is remarkable - you really feel she's inside the skin of Pai."

“I’ve always wanted to be an actor,” Keisha admits. “But I think recently I changed my decision. I thought ‘I can’t be an actor, I can’t’. Then this film came up and it was like someone saying to me, ‘You can, don’t give up’.”

RAWIRI PARATENE - Koro

“I don’t believe I’ve wanted a role as much as I wanted this one, I just wanted to stamp my name on it,” admits Rawiri Paratene of his role as Koro in *WHALE RIDER*. “It’s a dream role for an actor.”

Paratene has balanced both comic and serious roles throughout his career. He was previously seen in the role of Mulla in the feature film *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?*, the sequel to *Once Were Warriors*. Additional feature film credits include *Rapa Nui*, for Producer Kevin Costner.

He has also appeared in a wide variety of television productions in New Zealand, receiving a New Zealand Film and Television Best Actor award in 1996.

He has also been very active in theatre, as a director for numerous theatre productions; as resident writer, actor, and artistic director. Paratene also taught at Toi Whakaari: The New Zealand Drama School.

“The role of Koro is really a re-working of King Lear – a great male role,” says director, Niki Caro.

“Koro comes from a long line of first-born male children,” explains Paratene. “But he was born in an amazing time, a very difficult time to remain true to the teachings and the gifts of the ancestors,” Paratene explains.

“I would describe him as one of the most honest characters I’ll ever get to play. He is absolutely honest to his tikanga - to his understanding of Maori culture and customs. He is absolutely honest to the teachings of his ancestors - his father and his grandfather and to the male lineage that he is such a strong part of. But with that honesty comes a stubbornness and a pride and that’s what trips him up. He’s blind to the challenges that are there in front of him and he’s blind to the answers. He cannot comprehend that this girl is the next in line. He won’t accept that because it’s never how it’s been.”

“I guess the greatest model for me has been my grandfather who’s now deceased,” Paratene explains. “He was an honest man, but he was a hard man and he was very much a rangatira [chief]. “

“It’s definitely an international story,” says Vicky Haughton of WHALE RIDER. “Although it has Maori content, it could be set in almost any country in the world. I’m certainly sure that it will be understood throughout the world and hopefully it might open a few eyes, although it’s strange to think this attitude towards women still exists today.”

Haughton was chosen for the role of Nanny Flowers only two weeks before shooting began. She consequently had little time to prepare, although her role as Hira Hita in her previous feature film *Her Majesty* (for which she was nominated as Best Actress at the 2001 Nokia New Zealand Film Awards) also required her to act a lot older than her years.

“I had to watch my movements to make sure they weren’t too fast, or too slow,” she explains. “I didn’t develop a stoop or a walk, but once the wig, the make-up and the costumes were on, it really developed from there. Then, when I got to Whangara I’d just sit watching the women in the community, talking and laughing and soaking up the atmosphere. Even though some of them were old in years, they still had great poise and vibrancy, so Nanny Flowers is still fit and agile for a grandmother.”

Haughton describes her character as “strong, wise and very tolerant. She needs her strength and patience to put up with Koro because of his stubbornness! He refuses to see what’s right in front of him – the leadership qualities in Pai. I think Flowers can see it all along, but she can’t make Koro see it. However, she is able to instil and reinforce confidence in Pai to keep her going.”

In addition to her role in *Her Majesty*, Haughton also starred with Cliff Curtis in South Pacific Pictures' feature film *Jubilee*.

A trained dancer, actor and singer, Haughton is familiar to New Zealand audiences for her extensive theatre credits. She has also appeared in a variety of television dramas such as *Hercules* and *Xena* for Pacific Renaissance; and *Deep Water Haven*; *Marlin Bay*; *Raider of the South Seas* for South Pacific Pictures.

CLIFF CURTIS - Porourangi

“It’s a privilege to be part of the evolution of story-telling in our country,” explains Cliff Curtis of his role in WHALE RIDER. “The first film I ever worked on was *The Piano* and in that the Maori were the piano carriers - a very exotic backdrop to the story.

“The next major film I was involved with was *Once Were Warriors* in which Maori were up front, but as a modern society of people who had lost their way. The traditional aspects of who we are as a people were in the background. The beauty of this film is that it depicts all of our heritage. It shows that it’s alive and well in our hearts, our bodies and our minds.”

Curtis is one of New Zealand's most successful acting talents. Most recently he appeared in *Training Day* with Denzel Washington, *Collateral Damage* with Arnold Schwarzenegger, and *The Majestic* with Jim Carrey. He also played Pablo Escobar in *Blow* with Johnny Depp and opposite George Clooney in *Three Kings*. Curtis also appeared with Nicolas Cage in *Bringing Out The Dead*, directed by Martin Scorsese; Al Pacino and Christopher Plummer in *The Insider* and Harrison Ford and Anne Heche in *6 Days, 7 Nights*.

He first came to the New Zealand public’s attention as Uncle Bully in *Once Were Warriors* for director Lee Tamahori. He also starred in South Pacific Pictures’ feature film *Jubilee*, which earned him a New Zealand Best Actor Award.

On seeing Niki Caro’s first film, *Memory and Desire*, Curtis phoned her the same day. “I told her I wanted to work with her at some stage. So when she later told me she was making WHALE RIDER, I was very interested.”

“Porourangi has been raised with a huge amount of expectations from his father but when he loses the love of his life and his first born son he takes off and doesn’t come back for 11 years. His father wants someone who can keep the traditional values as exact as possible. But Porourangi has decided that he’s going to use who he is as a Maori in a way that he sees fit. So there’s a lot of conflict there.”

“Porourangi has a beautiful relationship with his daughter,” Curtis continues. “But at the same time, his daughter reminds him of his incredible loss - of his wife and his son. He wants to protect Pai and be her father, but he's also had to separate himself from home. It's quite heartbreaking.”

ABOUT THE FILM-MAKERS

NIKI CARO - Director/Scriptwriter

“WHALE RIDER is essentially about leadership and the fact that leadership presents itself in the form of a young girl,” explains director Niki Caro. “It’s Pai’s destiny to lead, but that is in direct opposition to her grandfather’s beliefs, and he’s the person she loves more than anything in the world. So the film deals with his struggle to accept her destiny and the extraordinary lengths to which she’ll go to make him understand and prove her love to him.”

Caro is a highly successful, young director whose feature film debut, *Memory & Desire*, was selected for the prestigious Critics Week at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival. It was voted Best Film in the 1999 New Zealand Film Awards, also winning a Special Jury Prize for Caro’s work as both writer and director.

Her shorter films have been similarly honoured. *Footage*, an offbeat study of footwear fetishism was in Official Selection at the Venice Film Festival in 1996. *Sure To Rise*, Caro’s powerful, hypnotic love story was selected to screen In Competition at the 1994 Cannes Film Festival.

Her television drama has been consistently acknowledged in both New Zealand and internationally. *The Summer the Queen Came*, an affectionate look at the small, twisted details of life in suburbia, earned Caro both a Best Writer and Best Director nomination in the 1994 NZ Film and Television Awards.

Plain Tastes, a Montana Sunday Theatre drama, was nominated in the Best Television Drama and Best Writer categories in the 1996 New Zealand Film and Television Awards.

“I believe very strongly that the story of WHALE RIDER chose to be told on film now,” says director Niki Caro. “The Paikea legend has been around for over 1,000 years. But it chose to be told in book form through Witi Ihimaera in 1987 and it chooses to be told on film now. I don’t think the world was really ready for it 10 years ago. I think we are now. We’re ready to accept things spiritual.”

“The 11-year-old that I was, is not unlike parts of Pai,” says Niki. “But I also see myself in Koro as well. In order to tell this story I need to understand what leadership is.”

“As the leader of this film, as the director of this film, I understand that leadership is not about being the guy up the front shouting and screaming. It’s about being the person that serves the rest of them and makes an environment that people can do their best in, that they feel encouraged to do their best work; to go to places they might not ordinarily go, to feel safe enough and brave enough to go there.”

Caro rehearses a lot with her cast. “We talk a lot about the feelings the characters are experiencing and I expect actors to go there. I won’t cast somebody who won’t. You can have a brilliant actor and a brilliant director but if an actor isn’t prepared to go to those places then it can be a very hollow experience. There’s not a single actor on this film that has held back from going where they needed to go to and that’s the way this film had to be. But that’s what makes for a very rare and compelling performances.”

“In terms of a visual style for the film, I wanted to aim for a big, international look. Like *The Piano*, which framed the West Coast of New Zealand in such a way as to enchant the international movie-going community, my aim was to do the same for the East Coast. This meant having a cinematographer and designer of the highest calibre. My intention was to make WHALE RIDER totally universal, not just local.”

“Niki has delivered the picture I’ve dreamed about for the past ten years” says Producer John Barnett. “The emotion, the characterisation and the spirit of the story have all been captured superbly by Niki.”

TIM SANDERS - Producer

Tim Sanders received a BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television) Award for Best Film as producer of Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring*. He also co-produced Jackson's *The Frighteners*, starring Michael J. Fox for Universal Pictures.

Previous feature film credits include executive producer for *The Price Of Milk*; producer of *Aberration* in 1997; line producer on *Traps*, shot in Vietnam, starring Saskia Reeves and Jacqueline McKenzie, *Reckless Kelly*, directed by and starring Yahoo Serious for Warner Bros. and John Seale's *Til There Was You*, starring Mark Harmon and Deborah Unger.

In 1992 Sanders also worked on Bernardo Bertolucci's epic feature *Little Buddha*, starring Keanu Reeves and Chris Isaak.

Additional film credits include Peter Weir's *The Year of Living Dangerously*, starring Mel Gibson and Sigourney Weaver; *Race For The Yankee Zephyr* with George Peppard, Leslie Ann Warren, Donald Pleasance and Ken Wahl; *The Survivor* starring Joseph Cotton, Jenny Agutter and Robert Powell; Peter Weir's *Gallipoli*, starring Mel Gibson and Mark Lee and Russell Mulcahy's *Razorback*.

Sanders' television credits include *Plainclothes*, starring Rhonda Findleton; the mini-series *Fallout*, shot on locations in Hawaii, New Zealand, the US and UK; *The Last Frontier*, starring Linda Evans, Jack Thompson and Jason Robards; *Return To Eden*; *White Fang*, Turner Network Television's *Which Way Home*, starring Cybill Shepherd and John Waters; HBO's *A Dangerous Life* and the CBS television movie *Angel in Green*.

Sanders also served as Head of Production for South Pacific Pictures and executive produced numerous episodes of *Shortland Street* and *Marlin Bay*.

His film and television location work has taken him to 18 countries around the world.

JOHN BARNETT - Producer

John Barnett is responsible for the transition of WHALE RIDER from page to screen. He first read the novel more than 10 years ago and his commitment has resulted in WHALE RIDER the feature film. He has actively led the project through its development into production.

John Barnett began his career as an independent producer in 1974.

Over the past 20 years, he has produced television drama, documentaries and fifteen feature films, including *Jubilee*, starring Cliff Curtis; *Middle Age Spread*; *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*; *Race for the Yankee Zephyr* and the Australasian animated hit, *Footrot Flats*. He also served as Executive Producer on *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?*, the sequel to *Once Were Warriors*.

Barnett has been active in the politics of the business throughout his career and was a founder of New Zealand's industry magazine, OnFilm. He has also been actively involved in film, television and video distribution and in the development of multiplex cinemas throughout the country.

Barnett joined South Pacific Pictures as Managing Director in late 1993. Since then, he has overseen the company's move into longer run series and the establishment of a presence in Australia. He has also developed a number of European co-production projects.

In early 1998, he led a management buy-out of South Pacific Pictures, and together with Chrysalis Plc, he is the owner of New Zealand's largest film and television production company. In 1999 he moved the company into a new studio complex developed specifically for South Pacific Pictures.

Barnett also set up Sundance Channel (NZ) – the first Sundance affiliated channel outside the United States.

Until this year, Barnett also sat on the Board of the New Zealand Film Commission.

In June 2003, he was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the Queen's Birthday Honours list. The honour was awarded for Barnett's services to the film industry.

Since October 1999, Frank Hübner has been CEO of the Filmfonds ApolloMedia GmbH where he has been involved in a number of international productions including Bruce Beresford's *Bride of the Wind*; Alan Rudolph's *Investigating Sex*, starring Nick Nolte; *Amerikana*, starring Lukas Haas and Vincent D'Onofrio; *My First Mister*, starring Leelee Sobieski, Albert Brooks and John Goodman; *The Musketeer*, starring Catherine Deneuve and *You Stupid Man*, with Milla Jovovich.

ApolloMedia also have many features in post-production including *Diggity*, with Andrew McCarthy; *The Extremists*, starring Rufus Sewell; *FearDotCom*, starring Stephen Dorff and Stephen Rea; *Boat Trip*, starring Cuba Gooding Jr; *I Am Dina*, starring Gerard Depardieu; *Paradise Found*, starring Kiefer Sutherland and Natassja Kinski and *No Good Deed*, with Samuel L. Jackson and Milla Jovovich.

Hübner studied Law at the University of Cologne before joining the License Department of Westdeutscher Rundfunk from 1986-1991. He later became head of the Department for Foreign Productions and since 1988 was a member of the WDR commission for copyright agreements between WDR and German unions.

Since 1989, Hübner has been a member of the committee for the foundation of the Filmstiftung and worked for Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen GmbH from February 1991, as Executive Director and the following year as Deputy Director.

In October 1996 Hübner set up as a freelance media consultant and broker for media Insurances and 1998-2000 served as Chairman of the Association of TV, Film and Video Industry and was a member of the Board of the Directors of Westdeutscher Rundfunk.

BILL GAVIN - Executive Producer

Bill Gavin produced the feature films *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?*, starring Temuera Morrison and *Jubilee* starring Cliff Curtis. He also served as Head of Feature Films at South Pacific Pictures Ltd.

Born in Wellington, New Zealand, Gavin began his career in Europe as a journalist before joining the music business at the GTO group. He established GTO Films in 1974 and was Managing Director until 1978.

In 1978 Gavin was recruited by 20th Century Fox as General Manager of their Australian subsidiary, Hoyts Theatres Ltd. He established Hoyts Distribution where he spearheaded the company's entry into production.

He has also served Director of Sales for ITC Films, responsible for worldwide sales of their theatrical product including *On Golden Pond* and *Sophie's Choice*. Gavin joined Goldcrest Film & Television in 1982 as Director of Distribution and Marketing and also served on the Board.

He established the sales company, Gavin Film Ltd. in 1984, which specialised in the financing and marketing of quality independent films. He was Executive Producer on such pictures as Stephen Frear's *Prick Up Your Ears*; Mike Figgis' *Stormy Monday*; Whit Stillman's *Metropolitan*; David Hare's *Strapless*; Peter Greenaway's *Belly of an Architect* and Dennis Hopper's *The Hot Spot*.

Gavin returned to New Zealand in 1991 where he produced the feature *The Last Tattoo*, starring Rod Steiger and Kerry Fox in 1994.

In 2001 he returned to the United Kingdom to set up Bermondsey Films – a new film sales company.

LINDA GOLDSTEIN KNOWLTON - Executive Producer

Linda Goldstein Knowlton is President of Ladylike Films, her independent production company established in 1992. She made her feature debut in 1998 producing two films: *Crazy in Alabama*, starring Melanie Griffith and Lucas Black, with which Antonio Banderas made his directorial debut and *Mumford*, written and directed by Lawrence Kasdan.

She recently produced *The Shipping News*, the film adaptation of E. Annie Proulx's Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award-winning novel, directed by Lasse Hallstrom and starring Kevin Spacey, Dame Judi Dench and Cate Blanchett.

Among her other projects currently in development are Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* with Jodie Foster's Egg Pictures; *For Love*, from the novel by Sue Miller, to star Meryl Streep and *The Feast of Love*, from the novel by Charles Baxter, to be directed by Patricia Rozema.

Born and raised in Chicago, Linda studied Neuroscience at Brown University. She began her career in the office of the Governor of Rhode Island in Intergovernmental Relations and later worked at the American Film Institute, first in Washington DC and then in Los Angeles, as a fundraiser for film preservation.

LEON NARBEBY - Director of Photography

Leon Narbey is one of New Zealand's most acclaimed directors of photography. He received the Best Cinematography Award at the 2000 Nokia NZ Film Awards for Harry Sinclair's *The Price of Milk* and in 1994 for *Desperate Remedies*, which was also selected for Un Certain Regard at Cannes the previous year.

Additional film credits as cinematographer include *Jubilee*, starring Cliff Curtis, Annie Goldson's award-winning *Punitive Damage*; *Savage Honeymoon*; *Ruby and Rata*; *Other Halves*; *Trespases*, *Strata* and *Skin Deep*.

Narbey also directed the feature films *The Footstep Man* and *Illustrious Energy*, both of which he co-wrote with Martin Edmond. The latter won eight national and two international awards including the Hawaiian International Film Festival Best Film award in 1988.

He has also directed many television commercials and documentaries including *Visible Evidence*, an arts programme for TVNZ on eight social-documentary photographers and was director of photography on *Early Days Yet: Allen Curnow*, about the eminent New Zealand poet.

His numerous short film credits include director of photography on Michael Hurst's *I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry*; *Flying*; *Snap*; *Act of Murder*; *Beyond Gravity*; *The Transformers*; Harry Sinclair's *Lounge Bar*; and *Possum*, which received an Honorary Distinction for Best Cinematography at the 1998 Athens Short Film Festival, and the NZ Film and TV Awards Best Cinematography in a Short Drama Award.

Whale Rider was shot on Kodak 5245 and 5284 stock. "One is the fine grain daylight stock which is ultra fine grain. I love it, I've been using it for about 15 years. The other is the new expression 500 ASA stock which is very soft chroma film. It's very, very sensitive to low light," he explains. "Our key concern was naturalism. We wanted it to look almost unlit. But that can never be – you need light, you need big reflectors and dealing with the darker complexion of the Maori people, you need more light."

GRANT MAJOR - Production Designer

Grant Major received an Oscar nomination this year for Best Art Direction for *Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring*. It has already earned him an American Film Institute and US National Board of Review award as well as a BAFTA nomination (British Academy of Film and Television Awards). He also designed Niki Caro's first feature film, *Memory and Desire*.

"Although WHALE RIDER is a very local story, particular to Whangara, it's a classic story which can be re-told in different ways," says Major. "I think also the Maori look, particularly the Meeting House, is very rich and beautiful to look at. It's quite similar to Japanese architecture in some ways - its huge, heavy, wooden, beautifully carved sculptures which have ancestral resonance to them is fantastic. I think visually it's going to be a very strong film."

The award-winning production designer has worked on many of New Zealand's most acclaimed productions. He received the New Zealand Film and Television Best Design Award for his work on Jane Campion's *An Angel At My Table* and Peter Jackson's *Heavenly Creatures* and also designed Jackson's *The Frighteners*. Additional film credits include *Jack Be Nimble* and *The Ugly* for director Scott Reynolds.

Major began his career as a Set Designer for Television New Zealand before relocating to the UK where he served as Assistant Set Designer at the BBC in London and Belfast for four years. He then returned to New Zealand where he worked productions such as *Network News* for TVNZ; *TV3's National News* and *Nightline*; the NZ/UK co-production *The Grasscutter* and the internationally successful television series *Hercules* for Renaissance Pictures. He has also worked as set designer on Vincent Ward's highly acclaimed motion picture *The Navigator*, as well as numerous short films.

Away from the camera Major, working with Logan Brewer has designed the 'New Zealand Pavilion' for Expo 88 and 92; the Opening and Closing ceremonies at the 1990 Commonwealth Games; proposals for a New Zealand Theme Park in Japan, a tourist aquarium complex in Christchurch and the concept and production design for the International Rugby Hall of Fame.

Witi Ihimaera is an award-winning New Zealand writer. His works include the book of short stories *Pounamu, Pounamu* and the novels *Tangi* and *Matriarch*.

Ihimaera was interested in writing from an early age. From the start, he saw writing as a valuable opportunity to express in print his experience of being a Maori.

Whale Rider was written in New York and Cape Cod in the space of three weeks and was inspired by the arrival of a whale in New York which Ihimaera saw from his apartment overlooking the Hudson River. This extraordinary incident made him think of his home back in New Zealand and the whale mythologies of his people. From this came *Whale Rider*, a magical, mythical work about a young girl whose relationship with a whale ensures the salvation of her village. It is, says Ihimaera, the work of his 'that the Maori community accepts best'. He followed this in 1989 with *Dear Miss Mansfield*, a response to the Katherine Mansfield centenary celebrations which rewrites her stories from a Maori perspective.

Additional credits include *Whanau, The Matriarch, The New Net Goes Fishing, Maori* and *Bulibasha*. He is also co-editor of *Into the World of Light* and general editor of the five-volume series *Te Ao Marama* series.

He also produced libretti for opera and his first play, *Women Far Walking*, premiered in 2000 and has subsequently toured throughout New Zealand.

Ihimaera served as a diplomat with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, working for the New Zealand High Commission in Canberra as well as four years in New York and Washington, two of them as New Zealand Consul. He has been granted writing fellowships at the Universities of Otago and Victoria University. Since 1990 he has lectured in the English department of Auckland University.

David Coulson has won numerous awards for editing in film, television and commercials.

He has received the New Zealand Film and Television Best Film Editor Award on three occasions - for Leon Narbey's *The Footstep Man* and *Illustrious Energy* (which also won Best Picture at the Hawaiian International Film Festival) and *Broken English*, which also received a Best Editing Award at the Asia-Pacific Film Festival. Coulson was also a finalist for Best Editing on *User Friendly* and *Desperate Remedies* (selected for Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival and winner of Best Picture at the Kiev International Film Festival).

The short film *Pacific 3,2,1, Zero*, received the Best Editing (Television) at the NZ Film and TV Awards as well as Best Work Conceived for the Camera at the Midem Awards in Cannes. He has also worked on many other acclaimed short films, including *Kitchen Sink* by director Alison Maclean (in competition at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival and winner of Best Short Film at the Sydney Film Festival; NZ Film & TV Awards; Oporto Film Festival and Special Jury Prize at the Golden Gate Awards in San Francisco); *Linda's Body* (winner of Best Short Film at the NZ Film & TV Awards); *Rushes* (winner of the Silver Plaque at the Chicago Film Festival); *Avondale Dogs* (winner of Best Short Film at the NZ Film and Television Awards) and *Twilight of the Gods* (in competition at the Berlin Film Festival).

Coulson has also edited a number of drama series as well as several documentaries, most notably, *Behind Closed Doors*, winner of the Blue Ribbon Award at the American Film & TV Festival in New York. He has also received the NZ Advertising Gold, Silver and Bronze Axis Awards for his work on television commercials.

LISA GERRARD - Composer

Lisa Gerrard won a Golden Globe award (with Hans Zimmer) for Best Score for *Gladiator*. The film also earned Gerrard nominations for Grammy, BAFTA and Chicago Film Critics awards. Gerrard also received a nomination for Best Original Score (with Pieter Bourke) at the 2002 Golden Globe Awards for Michael Mann's *Ali*, the story of boxing great Muhammed Ali.

Although her name may be new to the world of film music, to fans of contemporary world music she is best known as half of the Australian duo Dead Can Dance. With collaborator Brendan Perry they have forged a unique sound that crossed the traditions of neo-classical, choral, baroque gothic, medieval and troubadour music and spanned the diverse cultures of Western and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Asia, North Africa, the Mediterranean and beyond. This spirit has mesmerized people worldwide as each of their albums sold to a progressively larger audience. In all they have released eight critically acclaimed albums.

In 1995, Gerrard recorded her first solo album, *The Mirror Pool*. After reuniting with Perry for 1996's *Spiritchaser*, and a Dead Can Dance world tour, Gerrard her second solo effort, 1998's *Duality*.

She branched into the realm of film in 1999 for Michael Mann's film *The Insider*. She then collaborated with renowned composer Hans Zimmer for *Gladiator*, followed by Pieter Bourke on *Ali*.

SOUTH PACIFIC PICTURES

South Pacific Pictures Limited is New Zealand's most prolific producer of film and television drama.

In the 15 years since its inception, the company has produced almost 1500 hours of drama programming that has entertained audiences in New Zealand and around the world.

Its teen drama series *Being Eve* is a semi-finalist in the 2002 International Emmys, and won a Gold Medal for teen programmes at the prestigious New York Festivals. *Being Eve* was also named the Best Drama at the 2002 New Zealand Television Awards. South Pacific Pictures' drama series *Mercy Peak* also picked up awards this year for Best Supporting Actor and Actress, and Best Script.

South Pacific Pictures is the producer of the feature films, *Jubilee* and *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?* the sequel to *Once Were Warriors*. *Broken Hearted* is the second highest grossing NZ film in its home market and was acquired by Universal for USA, Canada, UK, Germany and Spain. *Jubilee*, starring Cliff Curtis was released in April 2000 and international sales rights were acquired by Intermedia Film Sales.

South Pacific Pictures' flagship production is the primetime nightly 1/2 hour series *Shortland Street*. Now in its 11th year of production, *Shortland Street's* 2500th episode screened on New Zealand television in June 2002 and is the ratings leader in the key 15-39 demographic. The programme screens in 20 countries worldwide - across the ITV stations in the UK and in a number of English speaking markets in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean and Canada.

South Pacific Pictures is owned jointly by Endeavour Entertainment, owned by South Pacific Pictures' Managing Director, John Barnett and Chrysalis Group PLC, the UK media company.

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