



# My Friend Michael Jones

## Technical Details:

Title: My Friend Michael Jones  
Country of Production: New Zealand  
Language/s: English & Samoan (with English subtitles)  
Date of Completion: February 2018  
Shooting Format: Arri Alexa XT (Colour)  
Screening Formats: DCP, Quicktime Pro Res, H.264  
Aspect Ratio: 2:39:1  
Sound: 5:1  
Duration: 15 minutes  
Genre: Drama

## Contact:

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### **Logline:**

A high school misfit with OCD forms an unlikely friendship with a popular classmate through a shared passion for music and dance. An inspiring story of friendship that connects Pasifika culture, LGBTQIA+ awareness, overcoming bullying and anxiety disorder.

### **Synopsis:**

Michael Jones (MJ) is the ridicule of his high school peers. His obsessive compulsive need to finger-tap doorframes before entering and avoid cracks in the pavement make him a target for relentless bullying. Chief among his tormentors is Selena. When MJ discovers a secret that threatens Selena's standing within her devout Samoan family and popular school clique, the two teenagers form an unlikely bond through a shared passion for music and dance. When a series of events reveals Selena's true persona to the entire school, MJ must try and overcome his own affliction to stand up for his new friend.

Set in Ōtara, New Zealand, *My Friend Michael Jones* features an eclectic ensemble of Pasifika characters dealing with issues relating to anxiety disorder, bullying, LGBTQIA+ and suicide prevention.



## **Team Background Information:**

### **Samson Rambo (Co-Writer, Co-Director) & Ian Leaupepe (Co-Writer, Co-Director)**

Ian Leaupepe (left) and Samson Rambo (right) are New Zealand-born Samoan filmmakers based in South Auckland. 'My Friend Michael Jones' is their first professional short film project.

'My Friend Michael Jones' is a semi-autobiographical account of what it means to be a Samoan kid growing up in South Auckland and the negotiation of social and cultural frameworks inherent within that journey.

The film aims to spotlight important issues within the Samoan community; examining themes surrounding youth and adolescence, identity and cultural responsibility within a wider social context.

Recent figures from UNICEF indicate that New Zealand has the highest youth suicide rate in the developed world. Pasifika communities are especially affected - and with our young people in crisis, the themes and issues represented in 'My Friend Michael Jones' are very timely.

Our hope is that the film contributes to opening further dialogue within Pasifika communities and wider society with regards to LGBTQIA+ issues, bullying and youth suicide prevention.

(see page 5 for 'My Friend Michael Jones' festival selections and awards to date)

### **Eldon Booth (Co-Writer, Producer) & Alex Lovell (Producer)**

Since 2015, Eldon Booth and Alex Lovell have worked together developing film projects under the Run Charlie Films banner.

In 2016, they made the hit Loading Docs film *Mister Sunshine*, a documentary about Auckland's flamboyant shoeshine man Larry Woods. The short film received a 'Vimeo Staff Pick' and 'Short of the Week' honours, a showcase at Melbourne Documentary Film Festival, the curated Doc/Player programme at Sheffield Doc/Fest and competition screenings at Cinequest, DC Shorts and the BAFTA-recognised Aesthetica Short Film Festival.

In 2018, Run Charlie Films were commissioned by TVNZ to make *The Kid Who Could Dance*, a short documentary film about South-Auckland-based dancer Tony Pati (choreographer for *My Friend Michael Jones*).

## Team Background Information (Cont'd):

### Luke Haigh (Co-Editor)

Editing credits include acclaimed New Zealand features *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*, *Turbo Kid*, *Mega Time Squad* and *Guns Akimbo*.

### Ian McCarroll (Cinematographer)

Cinematography credits include acclaimed New Zealand features *Fantail* and *Beyond the Known World*.



## Key Credits:

Cast:	Villa Junior Lemanu, Luciane Buchanan, Jeremiah Tauamiti, Marlon Tu'ipulotu, Lusia Neemia, Theo David, Haanz Fa'avae, Ray Ray Nu'uola and Ella Hope-Higginson.
Directors:	Ian Leaupepe & Samson Rambo
Producers:	Alex Lovell & Eldon Booth
Screenplay:	Eldon Booth, Ian Leaupepe & Samson Rambo
Cinematography:	Ian McCarroll
Art Directors:	Vea Mafile'o & Emily Mafile'o
Composer:	Soraya LaPread
Editors:	Luke Haigh & Eldon Booth
Sound Design:	Nigel Foster
Choreographer:	Tony Pati

A Run Charlie Films production in association with the New Zealand Film Commission.

## **Selected Film Festivals/Awards:**

### **Wairoa Māori Film Festival – Indigenous Film Festival (June 2018)**

**(Wairoa, New Zealand)**

WINNER of Moana Best Pasifika Short Film Award

### **New Zealand International Film Festival (August 2018)**

**(Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin – New Zealand)**

New Zealand's Best Short Film Competition

WINNER of the Audience Award

WINNER of the Wallace Friends of the Civic Award for special merit

### **Show Me Shorts Film Festival – Academy Award-accredited (October 2018)**

**(Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch – New Zealand)**

WINNER Best NZ Film (Oscar-qualifying)

WINNER Best Actor (Villa Junior Lemanu)

WINNER Best Screenplay (Eldon Booth, Ian Leaupepe & Samson Rambo)

### **ImagineNATIVE Film and Media Arts Festival (October 2018)**

**(Toronto, Canada)**

WINNER of the Moon Jury Prize

### **New Zealand Cinematographers Society Awards (October 2018)**

**(Auckland, New Zealand)**

GOLD AWARD (Ian McCarroll)

### **Flickerfest International Short Film Festival – Academy Award-accredited (January 2019)**

**(Sydney, Australia)**

### **Māoriland Film Festival (March 2019)**

**(Ōtaki, New Zealand)**

WINNER of the People's Choice Award for Best Short Drama

### **Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival – Academy Award-accredited (May 2019)**

**(Los Angeles, USA)**

### **Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia – Academy Award-accredited (June 2019)**

**(Tokyo, Japan)**

### **Outfest Los Angeles LGBTQ Film Festival – Academy Award-accredited (July 2019)**

**(Los Angeles, USA)**