

ESCAPING IS JUST THE BEGINNING...

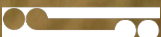
RUN RABBIT

A short film by Robyn Paterson



PRESS KIT

New Zealand
FILM COMMISSION



Te Tumu Whakaata Taonga



Writer/Director	Robyn Paterson
Producer	Paula Boock
Cinematographer	Alun Bollinger
Production Company	Rabbit Films Ltd
Country of Origin	New Zealand
Title	Run Rabbit
Duration	18min 58sec
Shooting Format	Arri Alexa 4K Pro Res 4:4:4
Screening Format	DCP, ProRes
Aspect Ratio	2.35
Sound	Dolby Digital 5.1
Date of Completion	2018

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Te Tumu Whakaata Taonga

Tag Line

Escaping is just the beginning

Log Line

Having lost almost everything he has known, a young refugee must pave a future in a provincial New Zealand town.

Short Synopsis

Fifteen year old refugee Tarek, and his older brother Nizar, have been re-settled in the sleepy provincial town of Alexandra, New Zealand. But settling Tarek's emotional geography is a much harder task, and he cannot reconcile this well-meaning but insular culture with his war-torn past. When Tarek signs up for the annual rabbit cull it triggers more in him than he expects.

Director's Notes

I was twelve years old and we had lived in New Zealand less than two weeks when I lay in bed paralysed with fear one night - explosions rattling the bedroom windows, flashes of light brighter than lightening. I eventually managed to move my legs and ran screaming downstairs to my parents, completely terrified. Having spent my childhood in Zimbabwe at a time of conflict, I had no context for these sounds and flashes other than gunfire and grenades – nothing else occurred to me. My parents opened the curtains and showed me the colourful patterns of light bursting open in the night sky to celebrate Otago Anniversary Day. It was the first time I had seen fireworks.

I became interested in telling Tarek's story with the recent influx of Syrian refugees to New Zealand. With the refugee crisis growing daily, there was a popular appeal for the government to increase its quota and allow more refugees into the country. They agreed, but wanted to allocate many into provincial towns rather than cities.

News coverage and current affairs articles usually center on what refugees are going through in order to make the journey to a new country - but I wanted to explore what a teen might face once he arrived. Embarking on a new life somewhere so vastly culturally different like New Zealand – particularly provincial towns – is just the beginning.

As a young migrant once myself, landing in Otago after a life in Africa, I have some small insight into what Tarek would be going through in the early stages of

resettlement. I have drawn from my own experience to inform Tarek's journey, and set it in a world – provincial Otago – which I know well. Though the experience of Tarek is specific to his situation, his central search for identity and belonging is universally relatable.

In Run Rabbit I am picking up on themes that I have worked with through my documentary projects – such as immigration and cross-cultural friendship (Finding Mercy), and the notion of 'home' (Queer Selfies). I am also beginning to work with elements that I would like to continue to develop in feature film projects – a teenager's point of view, authentic modern New Zealand, the juxtaposition of humour with hardship, unique perspectives.



Robyn Paterson **Writer/Director**

Over the past decade Robyn Paterson has worked variously in the New Zealand film and television industry as a director, producer, writer, and occasionally actor. Most recently she has been producing and directing popular architectural television series, *Grand Designs - New Zealand* as well as her own projects – *Run Rabbit*, her debut narrative short film, and documentary feature *In Zone*, currently in production.

Robyn's first documentary feature *Finding Mercy* – about her search for a missing friend in her homeland of Zimbabwe – premiered at IDFA in 2012 and was awarded Best Cinematography and Best Emerging Filmmaker at the DocEdge Film Festival in 2013. The film led to Robyn's appearance as a speaker at TEDx Auckland.

As an author, Robyn has published two non-fiction titles with Longacre Press/ Random House New Zealand.

Whatever her role, Robyn is passionate about projects which engage and challenge their audiences – with an ongoing focus on what unites us as people.



Paula Boock **Producer**

Paula Boock is an experienced producer and Managing Partner of Lippy Pictures Ltd. With co-owner Donna Malane she has created, written and produced five multiple award-winning telefeatures which have sold worldwide – *Until Proven Innocent*, *Tangiwai*, *Field Punishment No.1*, *Pirates of the Airwaves* and *Jean*. Directed by Robert Sarkies, *Jean* won an unprecedented 9 world medals at the 2017 New York Festivals and all 12 categories it was entered in at the 2017 NZ Television Awards.

Paula's first joint project with Robyn Paterson was the micro-short *Queer Selfies* in 2014. *Run Rabbit* is at the longer end of the scale (19 mins) and they are now developing a feature set in the same iconic landscape.



Alun Bollinger **Cinematographer**

Alun Bollinger, MNZM, has been crafting the slanting southern light onto film and other formats, for almost 40 years. He is arguably New Zealand's premier cinematographer; images framed by Bollinger's camera include some of the most indelible memories to come from iconic films like *Goodbye Pork Pie*, *Vigil*, *End of the Golden Weather* and *Heavenly Creatures*. He shot Peter Jackson's early films (*Heavenly Creatures*, *Forgotten Silver*, *The Frighteners*) and led the second unit on *Lord of the Rings*. A documentary *Barefoot Cinema: the Life and Art of Alun Bollinger*, titled for Albol's preference to shoot in bare feet, turned the camera 180 degrees on the famous cinematographer. He has won too many awards and honours to mention, and in 2005 was made a Member of the NZ Order of Merit.



CAST

Saman Tehrani (Tarek)

Age 16, Saman has lived in New Zealand since arriving as a refugee from Iran with his mother when he was nine years old. He is passionate about acting, topping his drama class at Mount Albert Grammar, and felt deeply connected to the script of Run Rabbit when he read it; “This is a film I was meant to be part of - the story means so much to me.”

Ram Al Laham (Nizar)

A recent refugee to New Zealand, Ram (18) has fresh and real experience of escaping from Syria and starting to form a life in his new home. After the trauma of losing friends and relatives, escaping across the mountains by foot, and eventually being settled in Wellington, Ram brings not only his love of acting but significant personal connection and advice to the film.

Erina Daniels (Nia)

An experienced New Zealand actress and Toi Whakaari graduate, Erina is best known for her acclaimed theatre work including Hui, Party with the Aunties, and Shot Bro. Having grown up working in shearing gangs, Erina’s authenticity and knowledge as well as her talent are a strong component of the film. Erina’s brother Nathan Daniels still works as a shearer in Central Otago and appears alongside her in Run Rabbit – the first time they have shared the screen.

Principle Cast

Saman Tehrani	<i>Tarek</i>
Ram Al Laham	<i>Nizar</i>
Erina Daniels	<i>Nia</i>
Peter Tait	<i>Ross</i>
Eilish Moran	<i>Elaine</i>
Jared Culling	<i>Pete</i>

Principle Crew

Director	Robyn Paterson
Producer	Paula Boock
Executive Producer	Brett Mills
Cinematographer	Alun Bollinger
Production Design	Heather Vincent
Costume Design	Kirsty Cameron, Chris Pickard
Editor	Gretchen Petersen
Sound	Nich Cunningham
Composer	Peter Hobbs
Colourist	Alana Cotton

