

The Last Bastion of Raw Enthusiastic & Committed Talent. Getting to Know the Players in the New Zealand Film Industry

In May 1988, The Business of Film conducted its first in-depth look at the New Zealand film industry. In our "an around the world" research project we revisited New Zealand in December 2000. It is abundantly clear that even though the Film Commission --now in its 22nd year -- without its continued support and the new 2000 initiative with the Film Fund, very few feature films by New Zealand filmmakers would come out of the country. As would be expected the film producing, film-funding landscape to an extent has changed enormously, and yet in many aspects remained the same. The marked very marked change is that population complexion has changed quite dramatically over the last ten to fifteen years. New Zealand has been undergoing socio-economic and bicultural change. In 1988 when I visited Auckland, it was a rarity to see a person of any color; today this thriving metropolis is speckled with a variety of complexions from the lightest shades to the deepest tan. The vibrancy of the milieu adds vibrancy to a country that is not only palpable, but also highly visible in relation to goods now available in the shops. In a series of conversations with Polynesian, Pakeha and Maori individuals it's evident that the entire country is undergoing deep-rooted changes.

The deepest vein touches the Maori, the original indigenous tribes of New Zealand, they are visibly fighting for a more bicultural acceptance of an environment in which the current renaissance of Maori culture, can survive and thrive to the benefit of the entire population. The Business of Film found that across every sector the people of New Zealand are facing a crossroads in the development of their country and their people. Naturally some accept the changes more readily than others do, but as an outsider, I found the very air breathed this change. The time to change is widely acknowledged by the 'majority' of population. However, the issues are far more complex. My analysis as an outsider is what really is at stake is not just the economic rewards of belonging to an upwardly mobile socio economic geopolitical group, it's the deep rooted culture that the younger Maori feel were denied to them, as they intermingled and grew up as Pakeha (mixed) straddled between two cultures diametrically opposed. These baby boomers are hungering for and demanding the right to be who they are within Maori culture and that right is fully acknowledged. I discovered that Maori culture is not unlike the North American culture, there is a strong bond with the earth the sky and all things of nature. A deeply spiritual people, they are trying in a modern world to hang on to the essence of Maori which they believe makes them all one, regardless of tribe. The social canvass of the country is endemic to the film and television industries, as I wrote in The Business Of Film issue The New Genre Black Filmmakers in the '90s, the medium of television and film has the power to influence and reflect in a short space of time, I personally believe the mosaic of a multicultural,

multinational world that we all now live in and can only continue to grow. In this atmosphere of Maori renaissance which I had not witnessed before, coupled with the changing needs and aspirations of filmmakers that I interviewed from directors, producers, executives, I felt that an issue which consists largely of edited conversations, will give you the reader an insight into not only the renaissance of what Maori is fighting for, but insight into for example the many changes Ruth Harley has made since becoming CEO of The New Zealand Film Commission just over four years ago. In addition the "In Conversation" really reflect what individuals feel about the film making opportunities in New Zealand, about the dynamics of producing films in New Zealand, the new Film Fund and the issue of Maori.

Once Were Warriors is the highest grossing New Zealand film to date. To the unenlightened outsiders it was a 'international story' about abuse and violence within New Zealand's uneducated population of an indigenous race within New Zealand. For the enlightened, **Once Were Warriors** is all the above but at it's core, (the pito) it's about power of spirit of Maori once lost, endeavoring to regain. For all the reasons above, I felt obliged in interest of the entire New Zealand film industry to present the following pages in the manner we have. Each individual interviewed had a variety of thoughts concerning writing, directing and producing low budgets films in New Zealand, which is a learning curve in itself for the international film community. New Zealand also has its own vernacular, where possible, we have tried to preserve it. The Business Of Film was the first international magazine to interview the talented director Peter Jackson. Through his efforts widely acknowledged by the entire industry he has been in the three years since commencing New Line's **The Lord of the Rings** trilogy, notched the profile of New Zealand in the eyes of the international producing community that no other entity or individual has collectively on behalf of New Zealand achieved before. Unable to talk with him because of his tight schedule, his first international interview is again published from 1988. In addition we are pleased to include other firsts: the talented Christine Jeff's whose film **Rain** is in Directors Fortnight; Vanessa Ashurst and Gillian Sheldrick, director/producer team on **Snakeskin**, and Vanessa Alexander of **Magik + Rose**. The talented Yvonne Mackay, fresh from her enormous success with the telefeature **Clare**, is now concentrating fully on developing and directing feature films, the first of which is **One Moment AKA Castle of Lies**. I hope that you will enjoy this supplement to The Business of Film as much as I have enjoyed meeting and talking to this small section of talented and committed individuals who make up a minute proportion of a small, but vibrant community and film industry in New Zealand.

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CONTENTS

New Zealand Special Issue



Yvonne Mackay
Director

One Moment AKA **Castle Of Lies**, her first feature for a number of years has secured the majority of its financing both from New Zealand and EuroArts in Germany.

- 78 Truth Of The Moment
- 80 Focused In The Same Direction
- 82 Balancing The Complex Needs Of The International Film Community
- 84 The Black Hole Of Mergers & Acquisitions
- 85 The Benefits Outweigh The Compromise
- 86 Seeking To Build A Strong Vigorous Indie Sector
- 88 Sourcing Own Creativity & Images
- 92 A New Generation Of Filmmakers
- 93 The Space And Time For Film
- 94 A Rich Element Of Black Comedy
- 96 Films More Like Architecture Than Art



- 98 Series Success Catalyst For Expansion
- 100 Squeezing The Maximum From Every Dollar
- 101 Independent Movies Not Art House
- 102 An Impression That Changes Our Lives
- 104 Blending Comedy And Drama
- 105 Celebrated Maori
- 106 Aspiring To Achieve Two Contradictory Aims
- 108 Communicating Directly To The Audience
- 110 A Chain Of Empowerment
- 112 The Spirit Of Maori Essence
- 114 Young Blood Cult
- 115 New Zealand Biographies And Profiles





Scene From Rain

The Truth Of The Moment

The Business Of Film: You are obviously a very thoughtful and careful director with a desire to convey emotions in terms of the storytelling. As a director, do you feel that you've conveyed that in the movie *Rain*, which currently is being shown during Directors Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival 2001?

it was important for me to find a child who could improvise

Christine Jeffs: *Rain* is a landscape of subtle emotions that creeps upon you, you know something's going to happen, you're not quite sure what, it's not overly dramatic or highly emotional on the surface, it's something that builds. I think in terms of the main character Janey, she clearly shows a huge development in growth and, in the end, what moves the audience is the way that she has to deal with the situation, I think that works in this film.

TBOF: Working with children is always difficult for a director, How did you solicit what you need for the film from the actors? How did you work with them to try to achieve the mood you required?

CJ: I didn't try to control them in any way. Just encourage them to release their spirit into the process and on to the screen. I didn't direct them technically with regard to the marks or about this is right or wrong. I used the script as a very basic guide so that the text is only there in terms of guidance. There's a lot of truthfulness in *Rain* that comes out in the way that the kids express their interpretation of what's going on. In terms of the relationship between each other as a brother and sister and in terms of the relationship between the mom and dad and their roles in the family and also with the stranger that comes into their lives.

TBOF: But isn't it rather difficult to control—as a director?

CJ: It's how I work in commercials. In casting the film it was important for me to find a child who could improvise. Eventually I found a child that could not say his lines, and was inexperienced as an actor. But I felt he had a spiritual way of relating to the world that I thought I could capture on camera. I wasn't nervous about him playing the role, because when you engage someone, you have to believe in him or her totally. We gave him a week's rehearsal with a chaperon who gave him some of the foundations, so that he could feel supported and strong to do the part. He explored and learnt where he could find a voice, and most importantly trust. In a classroom of children he'd be the one that you wouldn't notice, because he was very inside of himself, a very

thoughtful child, exceptionally bright and funny, and just what I was looking for. He had closed himself from the outside world, so we just encouraged what I felt was inside to come out. A

you need to have a contract with them about your relationship

couple of weeks later. He was ready to flourish. The key thing with children is that they have to want to do the job first, you need to have a contract with them about your relationship, and it's not about waving a stick its just about them knowing the boundaries within which they work, and then once that and the trust has been established, if you say you need to go in this direction, then they go. In terms of Jim, I'm exceptionally proud of him. He's an extraordinary child, he was so truthful and so spontaneous, and he was able to realise the most amazing moments to the role. I think there were times during the shoot when the adults found it difficult, because he was so into the moment all the time. As a director you're always looking for the truth of any moment. He learnt to be so confident in himself that all controlling elements involved in filming



Scene From Rain

would go away and he just focused on what he had to do. Every now and then, we'd clarify the difference between him and the role he had to play. But with the foundation that we had of very clear boundaries of what's work and what's not work, he was able to flourish, so much so that when he went back to his normal life he was able to join school teams, at the offset he was a very non-physical child, and he was able to utilise the energy gained from playing the part, and become more involved in his everyday life. I saw him recently and he told me he was on the school cross-country and soccer teams.

TBOF: *Rain* was shot on a low budget, a tight 32 day schedule, by the sea, where you were at the mercy of the elements, not an easy shoot for a first time director, how difficult was it?

CJ: It was quite hard. We shot most of the scenes on a tidal inlet, sometimes we would be attempting to shoot a swimming scene, which maybe involved a sandcastle, but couldn't shoot, because we had to move the sandcastle up the beach due to the tide. On another occasion we managed to move the trucks and crane just in time before the water came sweeping in and surrounded us. It was also difficult because going back to the trust I spoke of before there wasn't time or money for rehearsals; there was no time for the actors to come together as a family. Kate was cast about a week before we shot, I just went through in a very basic way with the script, for the actors to understand the text, and we did a couple of read-throughs, and a read-through with everyone. I think that you accept the speed at which you have to work. I'm very happy to work fast, but I realize at the time as you're doing it, how compromised you really are. So, an example

of how that works, you go to one place, you can't shoot because the tide isn't in, when it's supposed to be. You can't get access to another location, so you've shot nothing all morning and lost half a day. Obviously, we'd still get a few scenes inside the house. So we ended up saying, how long have we got? Let's shoot a three-minute scene with one of the children. We just needed an intense focus to get it done, and the children were always my priority. Probably the adults didn't really enjoy that too much, but it was always really important that they felt always grounded going into a scene. So I'd always take them separately from the adults, because it's different energies, make sure that they were strong and then we'd take the adults, and I'd discuss with the adults how I wanted them to interpret the scene. Having to improvise worked well, as an example with Jim. One of the things he did which is really funny. In terms of the power of writing when you're in a scene, and whose energy is equal or unequal and so on, he became so confident at one time he said to the more experienced actor playing the mother Sarah, he said, "Sarah, I will drive this part of the scene." And she turned around to me, and just threw up her arms with a smile.

TBOF: As a director, again, do you feel that what you've put up on the screen is how you would like, in general, most people to see the scene? Very often critics compare movies by saying she shoots like Kubrick, personally I think that is an injustice to everybody's individual talent. Do you think that your aim at the end of the day is to put something on screen that each of us individually can interpret, coming from our own different emotional access?



Christine Jeffs

CJ: It's a very interactive film, people do take what they want from it, that's one of the things about it. I think *Rain* particularly has a lot of space and a lot of room for interpretation, my attitude and intention are the same, and is very clear in many parts of the film. From the test screening, people definitely come out with what I intended for them to come out with. But then again they bring their own experience and perspective to it, and it has a different meaning for each individual.

TBOF: You are an extremely successful commercial's director, do you want to go on making features? What are your thoughts about taking on another feature film?

CJ: I'd like to do another film but it would have to be something that had some meaning for me to go on the journey. I always work with the same crew because relationships are really important to me. I tend to want what is from the inside. Working together with the team especially my partner who is also my DP, is an organic process, we have a sixth sense of what both our needs are, on *Rain* it was particularly helpful because, we could in instances if necessary interchange our job functions, which was very useful, and comfortable for me on the tight schedule we had.

TBOF: Are you completely happy with *Rain*, did you have fun when you look back on it, and because you are a perfectionist do you think you are difficult to work with?

CJ: I'm really glad for the experience and certainly, I think it's it certainly sharpened me, and made me stronger, it was about having to film *Rain* on a tight budget, and about focus. I got an enormous amount of pleasure from the editing, I really enjoyed that very much. Am I difficult to work with? I think that perhaps I am probably not happy with things when I should be. That's really hard for other people, and sometimes it's really hard for me too.



Ruth Harley

Focused In The Same Direction

*Now on the second fourth year of her term, Ruth Harley, Chief Executive Officer, of New Zealand's Film Commission, is keen to continue and implement the programmes she sees as necessary for The Commission to serve the independent film community of New Zealand. In conversation with The Business of Film she discusses the recipe for success that has seen the rise in profile of the New Zealand Film Commission both at home and abroad, her perspective on the impact of **The Lord of the Rings** production and whether the method by which The Commission selects the films it backs is fair.*

The Business Of Film: In the last four years, from talking to the industry here, The New Zealand Film Commission has achieved a markedly more cohesive profile in respect of the filmmakers and how The Commission works for them? What has your contribution been to the process, What have you been able to implement and was it hard? New Zealand recently had a change of government, how has that effected the job you set out to accomplish?
Ruth Harley: I think the things that I was able to do are the things I set out to do. I got people working together as a team, all focused in the same direction including the people who work alongside The Commission. It wasn't like that when I came. I also made a commitment to making a number of films happen, as many as possible, when I came there were two or three. On the total slate now from pre-production through to finished film now numbers about 16. You can't get successful in this business without a roster of films. We needed to have a range of films, in response to Larry Parr's idea we established a super low budget slate designed for digital production. Which is the direction low budget filmmaking is headed, **Magik + Rose** has

grossed nearly \$300,000 in the New Zealand box office. Vanessa Alexander, the writer/director put a huge amount of effort into the release. That very low budget or entry level slate was purpose built for digital though at the time it didn't necessarily see itself that way, but that's absolutely the way it's going to go now. And then there is the Portman slate, which again is entry level but for more populist, broader kind of films. I didn't introduce it, but it wasn't working so I put a lot of energy into it to make it work and it has worked. **Via Satellite, Stickmen, Snakeskin and Scarfies** have all come from that programme. Those films have all been successful; they broadened the range, and brought new talent through. With these slates the talent have the opportunity to go on to a second and subsequent film, as many of them are now doing. This was why the Film Fund was important and that was the vision we had three years ago, targeting this last election to get the government to secure that funding. Which will enable us to have a New Zealand slate that might, not counting of course the Peter Jackson end of the market look like a couple of digital films, a couple of films with Portman, a couple of Film Commission's films

such as **Rain**, which are likely to be more personal vision films. And a couple of high budget ones, which would be about eight films. That's about what we can do. Alongside that we've got a whole range of initiatives running on the Maori talent front. There's no shortage of Maori talent but there is a shortage of people with a good writer base, there are not enough directors coming through the entry-level ranks and not enough producers. What we found is that it's taking longer for the Maori projects to come through. Nothing wrong with that but you just have to make for a longer timetable.

TBOF: The other part of the question, the government change, obviously must have helped a lot, they seem to be putting a lot of emphasis on the arts. Have you being able to increase the amount of dollars you currently have access to?

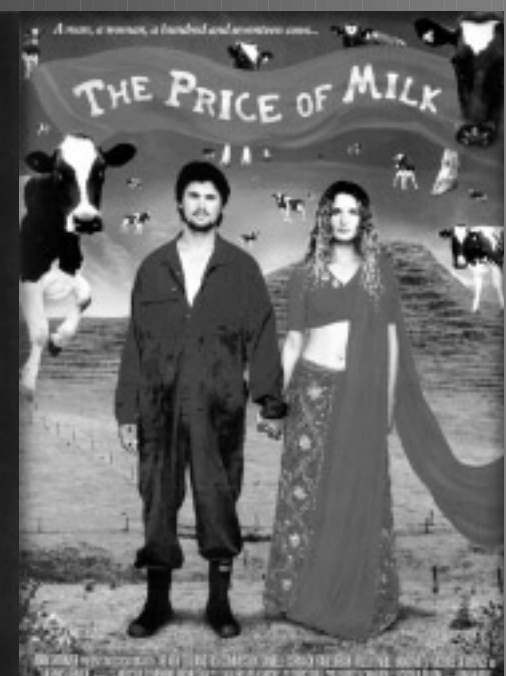
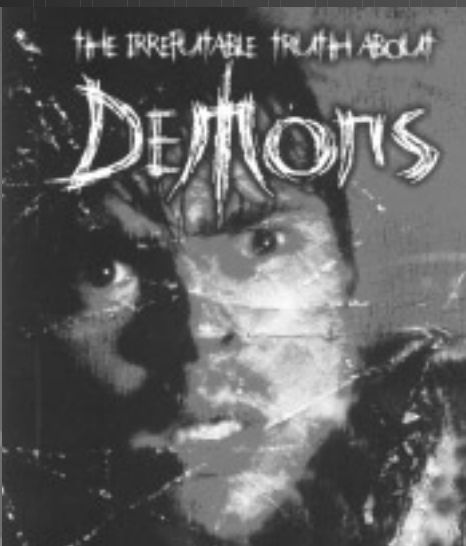
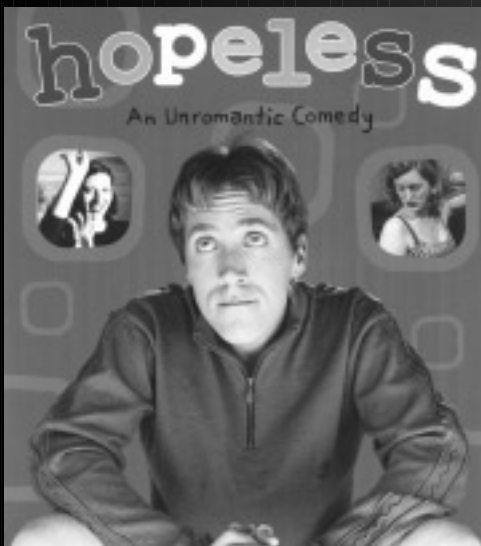
RH: We have enough money to do a bigger job in the next three years over the last three years. Significantly we do. The new government has been enormously helpful. The last two years we haven't spent that much. This year we might spend more. We are trying to find a number of ways of focusing on writers. The next big focus I

want to make is on writers, the last three years the focus has been getting the new teams through the gate. And getting the money to lift the gate. And we've done both those things. Another change, which I focused on from the very beginning, is the gap between the production community and the exhibition and distribution community in New Zealand. A huge gap, the exhibition community was frustrated at what it saw was a lack of cooperation from the production community that was intrinsically deeply suspicious of the exhibition community, partly because they were unrealistic in their expectations. I have put a lot of effort into the special distribution community and changed Kathleen's job function and its made a

considerable difference and has a heavy emphasis on it, for a number of reasons. Partly because it makes no sense to have a gap there, and partly because it is cultural money and the real return on that cultural money is in the New Zealand market and so we have to do it well. We also brought Michael on board, so The Commission's working between the producer, the distributors and exhibitors much more strenuously to make sure that the dollars are milked harder, it's in everybody's interests and it just needed a bridge. With regard to selection -- well, as far as process of which projects The Film Commission makes, I think we're fair, and we have an absolute responsibility to be fair because we're a government agency but I don't think for the rest of

it that it's about fair. It's about making the best opportunity in a tremendously high risk business. It's a gamble. Every single decision is a gamble so fair is about process. Fair is not about the decisions. The production of **The Lord of the Rings** created a profile for film that it didn't have before. It put the industry on the map, and gave it credibility. I think it was helpful in creating the environment, which was possible to get the film fund capitalised. I don't put it down entirely to that but I certainly think it was helpful. If Peter had not stayed here with **The Lord Of The Rings**, I don't believe we'd have a post-production facility that's supportive to the local and cultural films. Just keeping that infrastructure here is enormously, enormously helpful.

New Zealand Feature Films 1980-2001



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Balancing The Complex Needs Of The International Film Production Community

The Film Unit based in Wellington, is New Zealand's premier film, post-production laboratory with state-of-the-art facilities from neg. processing, and dailies on location facility through digital sound post-production to release prints. Owned by Peter Jackson, renowned director currently working on **The Lord of the Rings** trilogy, and other partners. His ownership of the studio has not only been beneficial to the New Zealand filmmakers but instrumental in ensuring that a much needed structure vital to the economic health of the community at large was preserved intact. Sue Thompson, CEO, has a long affiliation working within the studio and on various projects over many years with Peter Jackson. Thompson explains, "Peter felt compelled to buy The Film Unit, if it had been bought by one of the other bidders, there was a clear and stated threat to close it down and move all the facilities to Sydney. Strategically for filmmakers in New Zealand if that had occurred, filmmakers based in New Zealand would have been faced with not only raising post-production costs, but also

enormous inconvenience of living in Wellington and travelling to Sydney for a segment of post-production. The combined resources of Weta Digital (owned by Jackson) and The Film Unit gives our facility a unique position in that we are able to draw on a wealth of experience covering all facets of digital technology, ranging from research, analysis through to expertise in relation to our key cinema customers."

In 1994 Thompson was a production executive at the then Avalon Studios, and her vast experience not only at the studio but also amongst New Zealand filmmakers, and the film community, made her an ideal candidate for the job. As a creative rather than a corporate individual how has the transition in job function been for her personally? Thompson said "It's been astonishingly easy, because of the breadth of experience and dedication of the team. In retrospect (although it felt huge at the time), to a large extent when it was government owned it is fair to say that there was a degree of lethargy brought about by over five-years of uncertain ownership, today the atmosphere is more

commercial and that's partly because people who are here, have a great team spirit and a sense of accomplishment in the production's that come through our doors. When it was government

*breadth of experience
and dedication
of the team*

owned, the studio had a commission imperative, but little else. Taking on the task of running the studio, for this business to survive we had to strip the costs down to a good, functioning level. We have made an enormous investment into the facility as a whole since Peter's ownership including sound mixing equipment, a digital scanning and recording department and digital televine equipment. That technology has increased exponentially in the last 15-years. In spite of much cost benefit analysis the previous

owners were not interested in going another step even when digital telecines became a mandatory production requirement. Our market share in laboratory work was being undermined as a consequence, because they wanted to get involved in digital transmission. They saw broadcast transmission as their core business and filmmaking as not essential. One of the greatest benefits of Peter owning the studio is that he understands the needs of the filmmakers. Since he took control he's invested an enormous amount of money into digital telecine that was installed in time for **The Lord of the Rings**. Under Thompson's aegis, the facility has clearly defined its brand with its company's core customer, the cinema and filmmakers. The facilities also meet the needs of the television industry.

The initial capital investment was high, but the installation of the digital telecine, has not only satisfied the requirements of **The Lord of the Rings** but over the last year over NZ\$900-million worth of production has gone through The Film Unit's doors. "I'm really thrilled that our investment has paid off so handsomely," said Thompson, "Peter and we all fought to keep the post-production in New Zealand for a myriad of reasons. We buy equipment from a technical and engineering point of view, based on our fear of the tyranny of distance. Which, ironically, when we're servicing our customers, all we work to is eliminating that. Whatever we buy has to be robust enough, the lines of communication have to be clear enough because we are in one of the most isolated areas in the world, in terms of equipment supply. That's why we bought that first desk, why we waited for digital technology to stabilise, and we recently bought a Euphomix Series 5, fully digital mixing desk. It also means our capacity in the sound department is two-fold because, we retained the Otari, if anything happens in terms of deadlines, pressures, we've got enough stages."

The speed at which technology evolves continues relentlessly and mindful of the minefield Thompson has been prudent in her approach, whilst maintaining the state of the art facilitates of laboratory. In the world of equipment that governs the many aspects of film production and distribution it's clear that the industry is not with one voice in regard to the impending technology. Where is digital image capturing going? Where is digital post going? Where is exhibition formats going? The laboratory is now equipped with a digital sound stage, and digital telecine. Thompson feels those two key investments gives the studio not only the necessary capacity but also it is now well positioned to upgrade when necessary.

Thompson continued, "Both the board and particularly Peter who is a very, sensible business person, are informed by storytelling as well as the economics of making the business work, so when I approach them about investment into the new technology we may need, if it makes sense financially and it enhances the ability, there is not further discussion.

Thompson's approach to running the studio is to ensure that first and foremost the customers needs are met and satisfied by

BENEFITS OF PETER JACKSON OWNING THE STUDIO IS THAT HE UNDERSTANDS THE NEEDS OF THE FILMMAKERS

people with the know-how and knowledge to answer any question that may arise from the job that is currently in hand, but equally she has innovated system whereby every department are in a position to answer a query to satisfy the customer if some one else is not readily available. Unabashedly she says, "My mantra of running the facility is making it easy on Thompson. It may sound selfish but actually everything falls out of that. If the quality's there to start with, I'm not dealing with angry people. If the service is there to start with, I'm not dealing with disgruntled people. If it ticks over operationally and technically I don't even hear about it. I only hear about problems. And those problems have decreased, very, very smoothly over the last four years, because we were the first lab to become involved in the imagecare program, which is the total quality management tool that's used. We interviewed everybody here, did their job descriptions again, including the chain of command what affected their output, how they in turn affected other people's output, redefined the procedures in their department. The people on the floor developed that and are responsible. We also developed a set of procedures and systems that gives guidance and solutions in a situation that requires instant thought, instant information, and instant a problem solving remedy. Dr Allan Thompson, a noted economic historian said, 'Sue, you know, every time you implement a quality program, it's going to cost you more in the first year and a

half. You must understand that and you must make provisions for it – it didn't, we saved money." Thompson and her management team at the studios next task is to further develop the CGI department, which she sees, is the future growth and customer base for the company.

Thompson said, "Digital technology is emerging faster than we all realize and that will most likely change who our customers are. To keep abreast we need to be flexible about who and what we provide our services to and for. We are keeping an eye on our digital scanning and recording equipment and make sure that we're actually providing what's needed. Again, trying to balance enormous complex situations, but I do think that people can throw out recommendations that actually have quite simple solutions because digital is now supposed to fix everything. We've got a huge amount on our plate in the next two years. If our customers think that the only film that we're servicing is **The Lord of the Rings**, we won't have a future. My job to make sure that I continue to build our customer base in all areas of film production."

*developed a set of
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and solutions*

Sue Thompson was promoted to CEO of The Film Unit in 1999 when Peter Jackson purchased the company from TV-New Zealand. Previously she had set the company up as a separate business unit and progressed to make The Film Unit become the first laboratory to receive total quality management accreditation from Kodak called imagecare.

As part of the company's progress, she oversaw substantial upgrading of the facilities including the installment of an in-house digital telecine, and extensive upgrading of the sound mixing units.

*Thompson started in the film industry over 20-years ago as promotions and management at several theatre companies in Australia and New Zealand, before embarking on a career as film buyer which afforded her valuable experience including international sales, film financing and production. She worked with Peter Jackson on such many of his films including **Braindead**, **Desperate Remedies** and **Heavenly Creatures**.*

She was deputy chair of the NZ Film Commission for two years, and is currently on the Board of Trustees of the NZ Film & TV School.

The Business Of Film: Now that you are New Zealand-based, what are the perceptions and difficulties of realising projects so far away from Europe and America, the hub of financing for film projects?

Bill Gavin: It's very difficult, frustrating and sometimes rewarding. Take **What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?** John Barnett who is an old friend approached me about the project. He had had some interest in it but the funding was not coming together. I read the script, when he called and said, "What do you think?" I said, "Are you really telling me there's \$5 million hanging on this script. If we can do some work on the script, I'd like to be involved." It was enormously complex because in effect, none of those deals were in place, the project changed several production companies, and there were at one time eight different financing sources. The whole process was very interesting and took a lot of paper work, and the film turned out to be a good film, it was the second biggest picture in New Zealand, and the fifth biggest opening of all time. We had pre-sold it to Polygram for distribution in Australia and New Zealand and they did a very good job. Unfortunately, we then got into negotiations and actually concluded with them selling it for all the other territories. They were involved simultaneously with Universal, originally trying to sell Polygram, the company, and it was transferred, it went to UIP and it's just out there in some black hole. It's just enormously frustrating, it hasn't been released anywhere else.

It very sad and very damaging for movies and ours is not the only one, when big companies get bought and sold and mergers and acquisitions occur, everyone sees only the bigger picture. And a film such as ours together with many other acquisitions of this company are tied up in a web of legalise which is very difficult to unravel. It's quite extraordinary.

The frustration of getting the funding together for **The Whale Rider** is a number of interesting problems that many producers face, but one of the difficulties for producers in New Zealand is vast distance. The first trip I made to Europe, I did the rounds of the sales agents, and Intermedia for instance loved the script. The other aspect was the amount of money we were looking for was really too much for a sales agent. Even if they got all the territories, if they didn't get a US component it was a risk. Territory by territory seems to be the route to take and that was successful in realising half the money we needed. Basically, with **The Whale Rider** you're selling a dream, you really need to get in, meet the people that make the decisions, look them in the eye and share your vision with them, and when they see what you see they commit. Primarily they want to know that the quality of the script is top notch, and the people involved in making this film are capable.

The Whale Rider is particularly complex; it involves a high percentage of CGI special effects, so we were very lucky to get Tim Sanders to come on board,

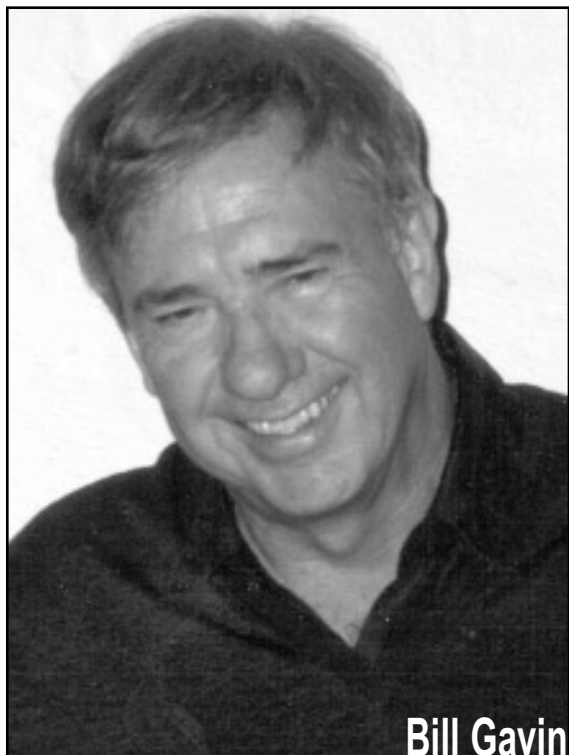
who had produced Peter Jackson films and then the first of **The Lord of the Rings** trilogy. **The Whale Rider** is a contemporary story – it's interwoven with an ancient Maori myth. The story of a young girl who is the first born in her generation, the first female that has been first born in this family for a thousand years who are the ruling family of this tribe on the East Coast. It's a mixture of fact and fiction.

Based at South Pacific Pictures where he will executive co-produce **The Whale Rider**, which is currently in development, Gavin first entered the film industry in 1974 when he established UK's GTO Films, acquiring rights to such films as Peter Weir's **Picnic at Hanging Rock** and Lina Wertmuller's **Swept Away**. Four years later joined 20th Century Fox and set up Hoyts Distribution in Australia eventually spearheading their entry into production. Following a time at Lord Grade's ITC Films in London, he joined Goldcrest Film and Television as director of marketing and distribution pre-selling such films as **The Killing Fields**, **Local Hero**, **Cal**, **Another Country** and **The Emerald Forest**.

In 1984 he started Gavin Films Ltd., a sales company specializing in financing and marketing independent films He returned to New Zealand in 1991 where he developed, produced and arranged financing for feature film projects such as Dennis Hopper's **The Hot Spot**, **The Last Tattoo**, **What Becomes of the Brokenhearted?** and **Jubilee**.

The Black Hole Of Mergers & Acquisitions

An experienced industry executive, with a broad knowledge across the spectrum of the entertainment industry, Bill Gavin relocated to New Zealand in 1991, and since then has been involved in a number of films including home based **What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?** and his latest project, for which he is near funding, is **The Whale Rider**. Gavin shares his views in respect of being on the other side, that of a producer and the problems and frustrations of losing a film in the black hole of mergers and acquisitions of the big companies.



Bill Gavin

The Benefits Outweigh The Compromise



Gaylene Preston

*The Business of Film caught up with director Gaylene Preston in between location scouting for her next project **Perfect Strangers** which has Sam Neill attached. Preston's latest offering will be an even bolder statement than her previously highly regarded movies.*

The Business of Film: You are one of the very few talented directors that New Zealand has produced who has not gone overseas, when you have had the chances, why?

Gaylene Preston: The reasons I stayed here were purely personal reasons really, to do with being a solo mother I think that it's paid off very well for our little family. Wellington is a wonderful city to live in. It's very easy; so staying put has turned out a really good thing. I think doing your own thing is a wonderful gift in life, there are a lot of filmmakers who either start off doing their own things but they don't end up doing their own things. I have been very lucky in that regard.

TBOF: What do you say to up and coming young directors like Vanessa and Gillian whom I recently met? They will probably have to grapple with the same sort of temptations that you've had?

GP: The main thing is don't even think it's going to go easy. It's jolly hard. When it's on a plate, investigate thoroughly underneath before committing. Even when it is easy, it's not.

TBOF: It appears from meeting you back in '86, the projects you have chosen to make and the success that you have enjoyed, that you have never really compromised.

GP: The big compromise for me has been to focus myself locally rather than internationally and that is a compromise. It compromises the budget levels you can work with, and it compromises the speed at which you can do things. It takes me a long time between features however the upside has been that I've been able to carry on making documentaries, I think I have developed really strongly as a documentary filmmaker, not as a documentary program maker, so I have been able to develop and be a rounded filmmaker. It's great and it works well.

My latest feature project, **Perfect Strangers**, is a psychosexual thriller, it's about the sheer terror of living happily ever after. It's a kind of a cousin of **Mr. Wrong**. I haven't made a thriller since **Mr. Wrong**. This is the first film that has come out of my head and I have to tell you its hell on me. **Perfect Strangers** is deeply, deviously funny with Sam Neill cast. From a fifteen-page treatment, he became informally and formally attached. This will suit him. This is about a woman who falls in love with the man who has kidnapped her, after she's killed him and put him in the freezer. Well, she kind of falls in love with him after she's killed him, but he doesn't die immediately. So she falls in love with him and she's trying to save his life. Very funny. I've written the film with marvellous performance

pieces for actors. It's set on an island, a breathtakingly beautiful place, and it's really exploring the ideas of transference – when you fall in love with someone, how much of it is what you transfer to him to be. So it is all drippingly romantic. Lots of sex, a sexual thriller. When it comes to sex in the movies, there's a hell of a lot of sex in the movies that I haven't found particularly interesting.

Iwant to challenge that. I think the exploring sexual passion and the power plays that go on within that are important. I have come to the opinion when it comes to sex, that doing it is far more interesting than watching it. So that's an essential problem for me as a filmmaker, in my movie, there has to be an edge if you're only left watching the action, then you're just left with the physicality, and sexuality to me has a vastly spiritual context, which we enter into because that is where the spirits meet, two bodies, two spirits. If you can't find a cinematic way of finding the spiritual path of the sexuality in whatever the sex scenes are going to happen you're going to f--- it up, that is the big challenge for me as a director, and it will be extremely hard to do. **Mr. Wrong** was one of the first gender benders. It was well before **Thelma and Louise**. We made this film; nobody had the foggiest clue what we're doing with it. Well, I'm up to my same old tricks. Is **Perfect Strangers** funny; is it a fairy tale, what is it? But I also think what happens when you get a bit older, you're less likely to worry about the bullshit that goes on when you try to get projects to happen. So I'm going for it.



David Gascoigne

Seeking To Build A Strong, Vigorous Indie Sector

David Gascoigne is Chairman of the newly constituted The Film Fund, a seasoned lawyer and past chairman of The New Zealand Film Commission. What are the ultimate goals of The Film Fund. Can it achieve with NZ\$ 22 million its objectives of truly meeting the needs of the independent production sector within New Zealand? In conversation with The Business of Film he expounds the aims behind The Film Fund and its mandate from the present government that has ensured that regardless of political change, The Film Fund will be in existence for an eight-year period, ensuring a stable foundation of commercial funds that filmmakers can tap into.

David Gascoigne: There's a curious phenomenon in New Zealand. At the top of the trade, there's Peter Jackson, and **The Lord of the Rings**, who convinced Hollywood that rather than taking him to Hollywood, Hollywood should come here. Which has been wonderful for New Zealand. He's a kind of role model for many filmmakers in New Zealand, but there's a significant gap between the level of his achievements and the newer, younger filmmakers that The New Zealand Film Commission traditionally looks after. People who are making

like a film fund not a bank, keeping it deliberately small and deliberately simple

their first film. So the current government, the local government, the Prime Minister, who is also the Minister of Arts, Culture and Heritage, Helen Clark announced in May 2000 a package of arts grants, one of those was a new fund of \$22-million set aside to be made available for New Zealand filmmakers who had made at least one feature film, and wanted to make more. The government decided to fund it in one hit, on an international basis, \$NZ22-million isn't a great amount of money. But here you can make that

money go quite a long way. A trust was set up, The New Zealand Film Production Trust. Which is simply known as The Film Fund, our aim is to make it more commercial in its approach. There are just five of us and we don't have a bureaucracy. When we get applications in, we'll get them assessed and we'll deal with them and we'll make decisions. We want it to operate like a film fund not a bank, keeping it deliberately small and deliberately simple. We plan on investing about \$NZ2.5-million more or less on each project, that's not a lot of money, but here, you can make films go a long way on a very small amount of money. We plan to do say two or three movies a year maybe more maybe just one. One of the purposes of having the fund at all is actually to try and make the business of having a career in film a more stable and a little more successful than it's been so far. We do want to nurture some of our best talent so that they can continue to work in this country. When we invest we want to see is our money matched by money from overseas other financial sources.

The Business Of Film: On say a \$NZ5-million project, we know that every deal is different, but would the trustees because of the needs to preserve the fund, over a period of time and show some return, want to be in the first or second position, is that part of the criteria of lending the money?

DG: We are investors, we want to do the best deal we can. We will take a commercial approach as far as we can to see that there is a positive

financial outcome and negotiate a position of some equality with other investors. At present, because we haven't made any investments as yet, December 2000 the fund is earning interest six and a half percent. We don't want to be prescriptive, we're going to try and be extremely flexible and responsive but not soft. The five of us have substantial and lengthy experience as part of the film industry, in an administrative and decision-making role. This is a very small country and the number of people who can qualify for funding from The Film Fund is comparatively small.

is actually to try and make the business of having a career in film

TBOF: The benefits of post-production from **The Lord of the Rings** trilogy will be finalised by 2003, the gap is coming up fairly quickly. Are you making strident efforts to start filling that gap. And is the fund sufficient?

DG: No, it's not sufficient. So \$NZ22-million is a sensible imitative by our government, I think it's a good one and it's our job to try and make it work. We do take account of other people's opinions, we will seek other people's opinions about the soundness of the script and its

marketability in various territories. I think on the question of working with overseas entities, we'll deal with selected organizations which we have a high level of confidence in. One of the things that the existence of this fund might do is make it easier for The Film Commission to direct more of its films towards development. Not every project that comes to The Film Fund will have been to The Film Commission first; some of them won't have been to The Film Commission at all. There is a truism – films should be carefully evolved and not rushed into production just because they're there. Time spent in careful development is always money well spent. So what we hope – that there will be ways in which people can evolve their projects with care. One of the things that we may end up doing is actually helping to fund projects that are co-productions. However, our rules are that we deal with New Zealand filmmakers. What is a New Zealand filmmaker? A New Zealand filmmaker is a New Zealand producer and/or director. We want there to be a number of enjoyable and successful New Zealand films that have been partly funded by this fund and we want to make sure, more particularly, that the new Zealand film industry is on a stronger basis, is a more sustainable industry with some experienced talent, living and working here. A strong independent sector with a vigorous life of its own that's what we would like to see. None of that's actually written down in our founding documents but it is our essential objective.

TBOF: Finally, a controversial topic. The Maori situation. NZ\$22-million is what you have said goes a long way. Talking to people like Don Selwyn and various other people there is a pool of Maori talent here both in front of and behind-the-camera, wanting to identify themselves. What is your opinion on whether or not funding needs to be available to further their endeavours?

DG: Some of my colleagues and I went to a special meeting called a Hui at the request of Barry Barclay with Maori filmmakers to talk about all this. We also held meetings with the Maori industry in Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch. As you know there is a desire in New Zealand to recognize the twin streams which is this country and its culture. One is the Maori culture; the other is the people whose ancestors immigrated here from about 1840 onwards, that's called pakeha culture. I understand and acknowledge that the indigenous people of New Zealand have legitimate expectations for what they can achieve and what they can achieve culturally. As to the question of setting aside a certain sum of money of this fund for the aspirations of the Maori filmmakers, I would prefer not to do that, but what I have said to Maori filmmakers is that we understand the aspirations of Maori filmmakers, and we will try very hard to assist whenever we can, consistent with the

commercial nature of this fund. We can't ignore the commercial basis or approach, but we do understand that the types of film that Maori may seek to make may be somewhat different in character than some of the projects other filmmakers' will present us with. And we will seek to be sensitive to that and take a broad and generous view to it, but we won't abandon the commercial approach.

TBOF: Surely it's not being terribly sensitive. First of all, nobody outside of New Zealand is going to give Maori money to make a culturally Maori film. There is a lot of rhetoric about the twin stream of cultural, but the Maori is behind the eight ball. For \$NZ500,000 and less movies can be made here, wouldn't that be an amount gesture, an incentive a recognition of their 'commercial' aspirations.

DG: If a Maori filmmaker wants to make highly experimental and very different film, that has no clearly defined market, but it's still a really worthwhile project that may be wonderful and may take off, like *The Cup* for example, that's the

the young people, there's a hunger to move up. But the way through the system is still difficult, and I'm not saying it should be made easy for them. But what I'm saying is that they don't have an equal playing ground. And, they want that equal playing ground.

DG: I want their playing ground to be as little hilly as possible. Because they've got legitimate aspirations and because there's nowhere else in the world you can go to make a Maori film. My view is that I wish to see a portion of the \$NZ22 million devoted towards film made by Maori. Should we put a figure on it? Not really. Because I don't think it's not meaningful. It's either too little or it's too much. And putting aside a certain sum of money that then doesn't get used is not sensible either. I'd rather this was dealt with through a positive attitude and a positive approach by the members of The Film Fund, which I'm confident is there for all filmmakers.

TBOF: But I also think that it might be perhaps the most proactive initiative anybody's attempted in New Zealand. Have you thought about it in that regard? If we're talking about

"We tend to be colonised by two main influences – the British and, more recently, the Americans – so for many New Zealanders it's a struggle to assert something that's independent, something that's special about New Zealand and makes us feel like a nation. In that context, and given that there are a number of people who can and do want to make films in New Zealand, it's necessary to have some kind of support mechanism to ensure that that happens."

- David Gascoigne, 1988

very kind of project that The Film Commission should be looking carefully at, because it has a rather stronger social mandate than we've got. So I think that in the first place, if a film is modest in style and experimental, The Film Commission is the appropriate place to go. That doesn't mean to say that they can't come and see The Film Fund and I'll expect that they will. I believe that Maori is entitled to serious, proper and positive consideration and does that mean a certain amount of positive discrimination? To a degree, and I'm speaking personally here, not for the other members of the fund. I believe in that, and where possible you would hope to achieve a result that suits them, but we won't abandon the idea, which is that we're set up to try and make commercially successful films.

TBOF: But David, it's a chicken and egg situation, they don't have a list of films behind them apart from *Once Were Warriors*, which is a brilliant movie which wasn't actually made by Maoris. The drive for it came from somebody who was non-Maori; Robin Scholes was the producer. In the short space of time I have spent in New Zealand this trip, I sense there is a real need, there's a real hunger, especially among

positive, and this twin society that has to grow side by side, if you were to give them that level playing ground. It's not marginalizing them by saying this is little or too much. It can't be too little at the end of the day, there is nowhere, any Maori with aspiration can say, 'If I can have a, b or c I can go there.' That's what every filmmaker needs.

DG: Well, when we were in Auckland having this Hui, I said, 'Judge us by what we do, because we hear what you're saying, we acknowledge your aspirations, we would like to see them recognized and we would like to be part of doing that.' And Barry Barclay, who's one of New Zealand's most experienced filmmakers, said, well, when this guy says that, let's see, because he has delivered in the past. We don't want to create separate pockets of money for separate purposes, because other people can make those claims, too. Not as powerfully as Maori can but there are other people who can make those claims. I don't want this to be a compartmentalised, fractured Film Fund. I'd like us to regard the \$NZ22-million as being a holistic amount, which we deal with recognizing that various people have different aspirations and seeking to satisfy some of those aspirations.



Don Selwyn, Director, The Merchant Of Venice

On location with his latest feature film project The Merchant of Venice translated into Maori and starring Maori talent, Don Selwyn acclaimed producer, director and actor and crusader for the Maori cause, talked openly and candidly about the plight of Maoris not only as a race in New Zealand presently enjoying a resurgence and renaissance of their culture, but within the film industry where they continue to be underrepresented.

Sourcing Own Creativity & Images

The Business Of Film: I'm most interested in talking to you about your mission, to preserve the Maori culture. I understand you've been at it for a few years – does it get any easier?

Don Selwyn: Sometimes I think it gets harder, because we're still trying to develop an attitude. First of all to bi-culturalism in this country, it goes through various forms of majority influences, which I think any minority culture struggles to identify itself within that process. When you are aware that you've got a rich culture, which is part of the landscape of this country, you feel disenfranchised when it's not

you feel disenfranchised when it's not showing its evidence and its presence

showing its evidence and its presence. And that drives me, because I was fortunate enough to be brought up where those values were very much our lifestyle and culture, coming from a very small community and being influenced by people who had, tremendous vision about themselves, not only their history, but the values and factors. When you think you came from Sky Father and

The Earth Mother, it's a wee bit different to the biblical scenario, therefore you want to grab the perspective – and understand it. I feel that film has a capacity, it's a very strong communicative medium and unless we get balances from the Maori view, this country is not going to be able to handle its multiculturalism until it handles its biculturalism with the indigenous people it's a continual battle. To a great extent the Maori have lost their cultural roots and identity, in the process they have developed a subculture through which the negatives are merging, and that becomes predominantly the content that films are made of. This particular project **The Merchant of Venice**, by Shakespeare, has a tremendous literary influence on the world. Because he dealt with not only people as human beings, but also the state of human nature. To be able to take **The Merchant of Venice**, which was translated into Maori language back in 1945 when this old man had a vision, to say here is a lovely story which we should take to the Maori people but the only way in which they're going to understand it is in their language. For the feature film we are concentrating on the visual sense. In a cultural sense, the narrative, the structure and the thematic elements of **The Merchant of Venice** are still the same, there is still the Jewish and Moroccan elements, but communication is through the Maori language, Portia's village is a place called Perimono which

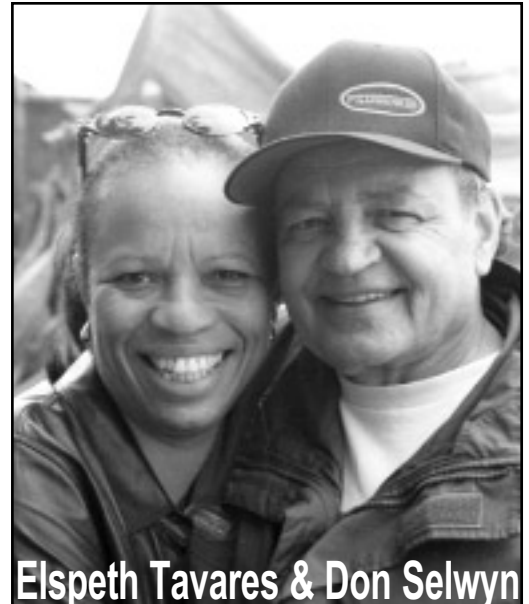
in Shakespeare is Belmonte which is a fictitious place. We have made New Zealand Belmonte, enabling us to embrace the Maori cultural elements within her lifestyle. The Venetian influence is how we fit in, so that the music, the culture, it's a celebration of Maori talent. We're

Maori...has developed a subculture through which the negatives are emerging, and that becomes the content that films are made of

going to exploit that and we make no apologies. I feel that by doing that, the Bard has given us a great opportunity for us to be able to present our culture to the world in this context, so we find that exciting. Maori music in particular embraces the rivers, the mountains, the earth, and the birds. The sequence where the Prince of Morocco is travelling to Perimono as a suitor to Portia, he walks through the forest at night, in Maori culture now our nymphs, and fairy people - tutihu we call them – they're acting as guardians through the forest, with the wonderful sounds of nature which in natural form, taking them through, we're exploiting that within the Maori culture.



Scene From "The Merchant Of Venice"



Elspeth Tavares & Don Selwyn

IT'S NOT ABOUT
SEPARATING, BUT
IT IS ABOUT
IDENTIFYING AND
THERE'S A
BIG DIFFERENCE

TBOF: From talking to a number of people, a lot of the Maori culture has been virtually eradicated or put aside. When the film is shown to the Maori population how much will they understand of what you are accomplishing through the production of *The Merchant of Venice* in the Maori language?

DS: There is a real resurgence, a renaissance that is happening now, with the film we're putting it into a context a dramatic literary form. Our interest is drama because we can embrace that. We can embrace the aspect of human nature, we can put it in a setting where Maori thoughts come rather than imposed thoughts, about what we are. We source our own creativity; we source our own images. All we ask then is the majority culture to actually participate and involve themselves in the process so we can all reflect on it, because we are all part and parcel of this renaissance. It's not about separating, but it is about identifying and there's a big difference. There's a lot of criticism about us for doing this film. We find that in actual fact people are more receptive to the idea offshore than they are here. Our society as a whole has become very cynical. Why are we being criticised for this feature film? You have to be careful you don't generalize – but primarily is the language issue that important? The people, who criticise us for our attempt to bring Shakespeare to our people, aren't there more important things? Should we

still be embracing the Scottish education system? Being a schoolteacher I know what it's like to have Europeans pose those sort of curricular restrictions and that happens to be what you

*the majority culture to
actually participate and
involve themselves in
the process so we can
all reflect on it*

ought to emerge out of. I'm saying no. You have to emerge out of yourself. Take the art department guy, no schooling but a brilliant artist who's a Maori. You look at him and you think he's one of the dropouts. What a person looks like is not the essence of them. Those are the sorts of things that we want to change. We want to flip the coin and say there's another side of it. We're trying to influence the Europeans, as well as some of our own that have become so colonised that they actually find it difficult to appreciate the Maori culture. Unless we have the opportunity to participate in a powerful media like film, take control and develop those skills, and have our input in a way which we can identify ourselves within it, then the gap's going

to get wider. And it's never going to be closed. We talk about closing the gap, it's not us that have to close the gaps, it is the majority that have got to close the gaps. We also have to be careful that we don't exploit other ethnic minorities at the expense of Maoridom. Maoridom is a very embracing people; it's their whole nature. And we don't have to be political about it. You just have to go about it and do it. We're not jumping up and down on a soapbox. All these aspects are of real concern to me.

TBOF: Why did you choose *The Merchant of Venice*? Was it the easiest?

DS: It was the only one that had been translated. It was the first translation into Maori. I did it as a stage production. when I started to perform at the schools I realized how much kids enjoyed it. It was a dream for me for me to direct this film. It's come at the right time because it has a poetic language. Language has changed and Maori has become very English colloquial based. Now you can actually hear the beauty of it. It's lovely hearing it. The cause is bigger than the film. The film is a catalyst. It's just a vehicle. With the philosophical position, you can precious about things, and very passionate. Sometimes you have to step back, because you think that, there's so much opposition out there that it's all not worth it. But you've got to be committed. Because in the process, you're gathering other people who say, hey, We can do it.

TBOF: What about *Once Were Warriors*, I found that such an incredibly powerful film. The scene that stirred me the most was when the young man is in the correctional centre and he does the Hakka dance. I actually hadn't made the spiritual association, because I was unaware of the depth of your culture. When I came to understand the significance of the Hakka, for me it's one of top ten films of modern times. It is a very powerful film, however, when I've spoken to Maoris, they think that it's negative – I don't think that it's negative because that situation happens in all the communities across the world.

DS: It's real. You've got to face up to reality. I think it's a dynamic film. It's a dynamic commentary on the emerging of a subculture that has been fractured by the fusing of two cultures, wonderful performances, even today can relate to it. People will not relate to *The Merchant of Venice* until they see it, because they think Shakespeare is hoity toity, it's above us. But I think when they see it they will relate. If you take *Once Were Warriors, What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?* and a number of other films, they all have a particular Maori perspective. In every race, there is tremendous range, the danger is when Europeans start to generalise then Maori's are in real difficulty with the Europeans locking us into a particular ethnic dynamics, we have a responsibility as filmmakers, and particularly Maori filmmakers, to broaden the process so they can see. We have some wonderful stories, we've done some wonderful half-hours – the big problem is we don't get enough airtime. I find it so frustrating

that their market perspective is determining the way in which Maori ought to be contributing. It's a market monopoly. It's not a free market. We've got all the rhetoric about a free market but it's market monopoly. That's the reality of it. And I have no hesitation in exposing that.

TBOF: How can you cut through it?

DS: Well, the way we cut through it is if we were to do this for television. We did apply, and it was turned down. Politically, this government said we've got to have more local content. I went back to them again, and then they agreed that they would do it. That sounded good, but what happened, they didn't want to put any money into it but they wanted control of it for five years, only three playdates that they would decide. I said no I'm not signing that contract. I want to make this a feature film where the rest of the world can appreciate it before people in New Zealand do. I'm not talking about the general public, I'm talking about the doorkeepers of the funding. Beyond the shores of New Zealand we have a lot of people who are akin to us, indigenous people, disenfranchised people in other countries all over the world who in actual fact are hungering for their own. I'm saying that what we have to do – in Maori terms – we call it whaka hono, the mountain meets a mountain, the rivers meet the river, the people meet the people, and this is the way in which we can find people who are receptive to our spirit, our cause. And ourselves as individuals. We want to make those connections because this is a business about people needing people, not money needing money. That's a distinct difference.

TBOF: In your quest to preserve the Maori culture, what about the question of the races mixing, How do you feel about that?

DS: The most exciting thing about that is that we should be rejoicing in the differences. There's a tendency for us to say that's different so stay away from it. The whole education system is built on the people having a fear of difference, rather than rejoicing in the differences. Now if we were to turn it around and make changes, culturally, and in an artistic sense, you want that growth to come from – in our world we call it the Pito – where your umbilical cord comes from – everyone in their umbilical cord has an artist, they have an essence, something that comes from their own perspective They may not even be able to speak like you and I. But they can paint beautifully, they can take lovely pictures, Why should we be cutting them out of the whole existence. It's sad – this old fellow used to say to me, he says, You know, Don, it's so simple. Why do they make it so difficult? And he's right. If we want to get into some sort of psychoanalysis, why do we do that? It's like people who don't give other people a chance to rehabilitate. We don't even give them a chance to start. Because we don't understand their readiness. We want to impose our structure on them straightaway. The moment that we start to discriminate, on all sorts of levels, not only cultural levels we actually then perpetuate the haves and the have not. This country has a lot of rhetoric, regarding race relations, in actual fact; we've got a lot to learn because the politics of the whole becomes more



Scene From The Merchant Of Venice

important than the essence of its evolution. I think that's sad. A couple of boys work in the art department had to go to the court because they hadn't paid their fines, drove without a license, they were going to go to jail. What a waste of time. On this film they are creating something, and we are keeping them at a job they're getting paid for. Working on the film, their whole image of themselves and their manna is heightened, it's no big deal, because there's a lot of people out there who are helping in their own way, but it seems to me that society as a whole needs to be thinking more in this way. The employment opportunities within the film industry are vast. We have been training people from Maori since 1980 and we want to continue to do that but there's very little funding to allow us to do that. The Film Commission cut out the training program. In Maoridom there's a concept called Whaka Tipuranga, the Generations Must Go On, One Fern Drops, Another Fern Grows. And if you think in that term, the cycle will go on, you ensure enthusiasm, you get the vision. People talk about the vision of the future. But the vision of the past gives us our presence and the vision for the future.

*you ensure enthusiasm,
you get the vision, the
vision of the past,
which is great*

TBOF: Do wealthy Maori contribute to the cause? One of the problems with the very wealthy African Americans in America, they really don't help each other as much as they could. Does that happen here, or is the Maori society because of numbers and opportunity not demographically and socioeconomically at that point?

DS: The fiscal world and economic world looks after itself. Goes round and round in circles, their circles, it doesn't drop off the merry-go-round into the poor people's hands. I come from a family where, there's a range. I have a brother who's very wealthy, and I say to him, you've got to employ Maori in your trucking business. Look after their health; make sure they go along to the doctor that's your responsibility. My responsibility in my company, I'm going to employ Maori first, and when we employ Europeans then they've got to train Maori, so that that processes goes on. We'll do that for all the ethnic races. But the preference is for Maori, because I expect Maori to do the same for the

other ethnic minorities later on. That's how the groundswell grows. It's very difficult for some of our people to go and work in other companies, even when we have the training, we couldn't get the work, I said to Ruth we've got to set up our own film company to employ them because they won't get employed. Now that we've got them employed and they're upscale I can't use them; they're working on other productions such as *Xena* when it was here. But it's good. When they move on, it makes room for somebody else.

THE WHOLE EDUCATION SYSTEM IS BUILT ON THE PEOPLE HAVING A FEAR OF DIFFERENCE, RATHER THAN REJOICING IN THE DIFFERENCES.

TBOF: It's such a long process, though, isn't it? Do you feel that you'll run out of time.

DS: It's funny, you think you're going to run out of time, but you never run out of time if you've got the process right. Because when I move on the line we call it, the dauu, it never breaks. So as long as we continue to bring young people on board, it's going to be there. People create an endless time, when you're gone the spirit of what you've done will live on. The old people say to me, Don, you know, the past and the future, you're only an individual between two eternities and it's but a small moment, and you have to do the best you can for your people in that moment. As long as you embrace the people who are going to be there when you're gone, then the moment is going to go longer, generation after generation.

TBOF: What do you think the New Zealand government should do. What are the things that you would like to see in place that would really benefit what you are doing on a bigger scale? What would be most constructive?

DS: They have got to focus on the awareness of what we're talking about. I think this government under Helen Clark is pushing the arts. The difficulty of course is that, when you start to push the arts everyone's in the scramble. If you provoke the consciousness and say we want more Maori television drama, no longer are we going to perpetuate this present situation? That would be a long way to change the cultural focus. Unfortunately, the moment a Maori programme is conceived as a bad bit of programming, ten good projects are wiped off the slate. But you've got to be aware of that. We're a small country, we have to get rid of the competitive jealousy and embrace ourselves more as an industry. When I ran the film school we paid the students to be there. Today they've got to pay \$15,000NZ a year on a student loan. It's a lot of money. A lot of young Maori can't afford to go to those schools, and we haven't

got the embracing structures to allow Maori people to get involved with good training. We've got to change the cultural mindset and the people who control the industry.

TBOF: Finally, are you reasonably happy with how far Maori has progressed. Within the film industry particularly.

DS: I'm happy because this production is another landmark in our development. We've got some wonderful scripts out there, which we've been pushing, they've been denied but I know they're going to happen. This production is opening other great opportunities for the Maori people like you are curious as to what's going on with Maori. We have to build, we've got to grow and we've got to walk, to talk. You can't do the talk without the walk. I say to

everyone, work hard, keep humble and to always be pessimistically optimistic.

*Don Selwyn was inspired to make a Maori version of Shakespeare's **The Merchant of Venice (Te Tangata Whai Rawa O Wentiti)**, as a feature film after directing a stage production in the Koanga Festival in Auckland. The imaginative version combines his passion for Shakespeare with his lifelong commitment to the revitalization of the Maori native language. His longstanding career encompasses actor, producer and director in New Zealand's film and television industry, Selwyn is champion of Maori drama, performed in both Maori and English, and a prime mover in encouraging respect for Maori viewpoints and culture in the country's entertainment industry.*

People create an endless time, when you're gone the spirit of what you've done will live on

*He began in the entertainment industry acting in a stage production of Shakespeare's **Midsummer Nights Dream** followed by the musical **Porgy & Bess**, the film **Sleeping Dogs** and television's **Mortimer's Patch**, **Marlin Bay**, **The Governor**, and **Pukemanu**.*

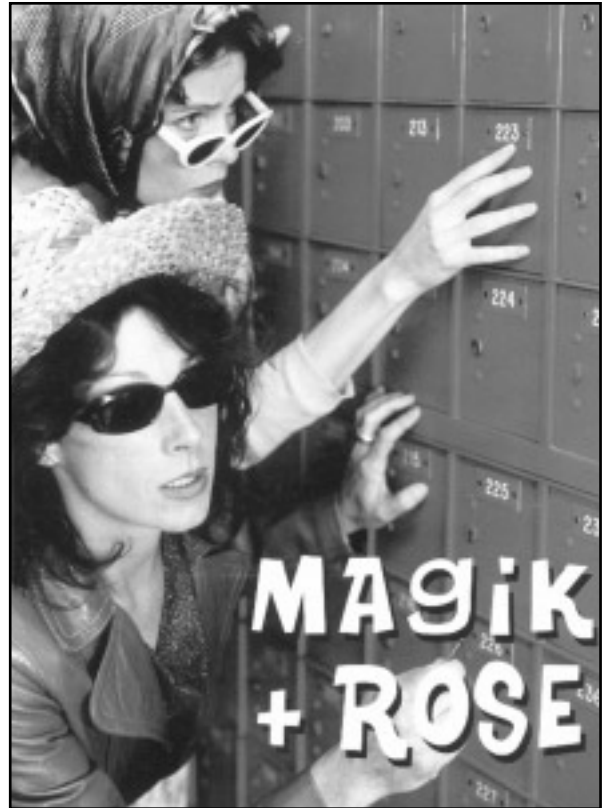
*Always concerned with education and promotion of Maori, he formed **He Taonga Films** to create job opportunities for course graduates, and produced Maori language television dramas **Maui Pootiki** and **Tohunga**, and the NZ Media Peace award-winning feature **The Feathers of Peace**.*

*He has secured roles for Maori actors in such feature films as **Once Were Warriors**, **What Becomes of the Brokenhearted?** **Broken English**, **Jubilee** and **Crooked Earth**.*



Kathleen Drumm

New Zealand Feature Films 1980-2001



A New Generation Of Film Makers

Kathleen Drumm has recently been appointed Head of Feature Film International Sales and Marketing for The New Zealand Film Commission. Since 1994 she has been on the international circuit (taking care of the Short Film program) working alongside Lindsay Shelton for the last six years, handling the coordination of New Zealand Films at the international markets. This Cannes Film Festival 2001 she flies solo, replacing Lindsay, who has now retired but continues to be a consultant to The Film Commission. As well as her responsibilities of the organization of New Zealand's participation at the film markets, AFM, Cannes, and MIFED, she plays a support role in the local theatrical release of New Zealand movies (see interview with Ruth Harley, CEO, NZ Film Commission) her experience working with the short film makers, has meant that she has grown up with the new generation of talented directors and producers many of whom have now made their first feature film and are on the next.

Drumm said, "Aside from the marvelous experience of working with Lindsay, and getting to know the international feature film distribution community over the last several years, I have been fortunate in that I've got to know the new generation of New Zealand filmmakers. I think that there's much more focus

*local box office success,
recognition in our
own country is a
vital component*

on development of a script than perhaps there used to be in the past and Christine Jeffs whose film **Rain** is in Directors Fortnight and fully funded by The Film Commission is one of our really talented filmmakers. When we look at the overall picture to decide which films we will fund 100% we have four objectives when money is given to the filmmakers. One to get a return on

investment, secondly local box office success, recognition in our own country is a vital component. Third is critical acclaim, prizes, and exposure at festivals around the world, and the fourth area is basically leveraging of opportunities for talent, so we recognize a talented filmmaker and we perceive that this will lead to bigger and greater things in the future. The Film Fund will meet the need that we've identified which is we don't want filmmakers to make a film, get recognized and never be seen again in New Zealand. To a certain extent, we're a nursery for the film industry giving people a first shot but we want people to continue to make movies here. The positive aspect of that is, some of our other filmmakers who have gone overseas are talking about making movies back here. At Cannes 2001, New Zealand has four new films available to international buyers. **Rain** sold through The New Zealand Film Commission. **Snakeskin** and **Stickman** sold through Portman Films and **Crooked Earth** sold by Pandora.

The Space & Time For Film



Snakeskin marks the directorial and producing feature film debut of director Gillian Ashurst and producer Vanessa Sheldrick. In conversation with *The Business of Film*, Gillian and Vanessa discuss the rigors of shooting a low budget film on a six-week shoot that demanded a different location each day. Ashurst and Sheldrick credit executive producer Chris Brown at ScreenVision-NZ with the tremendous support he gave to the project.

The Business Of Film: Was it hard to find the money? Do you feel that you have managed to produce the film or direct the film that you both wanted to within the confines of the financial resources you had available to you?

Gillian Ashurst: Actually getting the funding wasn't too difficult because we had a script that was well developed. We had already spent a couple of years working on it before we presented it to The New Zealand Commission. And, we already had a short film *Venus Blue* that had screened at Sundance.

Vanessa Sheldrick: I think that the reason why *Snakeskin* got funded was *Venus Blue* really shaped Gillian as a director. It had a unique style, they were excited by, because it was

Venus Blue...really shaped Gillian as the director it had a unique style

something different that hadn't been seen before. The Sundance people had liked it, and also Gillian had written the most amazing script, as soon as you read the script you could see the film, you could see the character. I think what's interesting about this project and the low budget aspect of it. When we were shooting Gillian always wanted the world and she didn't compromise in her writing, and expected the team to go out there, and make an effort for her and we were able to do that. It's

an action packed film with car chases, explosions, guns, and we managed to somehow pull it off on a low budget. We were also very lucky, we managed to get really creative people who never work on low budget films to work with us because they wanted to work on the film, and because of the influx of work with *The Lord of the Rings*, the money was not the main object. Really experienced crew were so supportive of what we were trying to do, people like Donny Duncan, the DOP, who's one of the best in the country.

GA: We literally took the whole cast and crew across the Alps, different locations every day, which was fantastic, it was wonderful, but it was also very tough. Our schedule was very, very demanding and ambitious for my first feature, yes, there were problems but we learnt a lot. I learnt how to compromise on the spot that's really hard. However, I didn't lose anything that I couldn't afford not to lose.

TBOF: Do you think as a director you feel precious about your work?

GA: Very. But I'm sure most directors do. I feel very precious about it. Maybe because I've written it as well. The experience of making this film was emotionally the most amazing experience of my life. And on the other hand, sometimes the most heartbreaking, because the days when you're driving through those beautiful amazing woods and you wish that we would stop and be filming a scene and you can't because you've got to run off to the next one, is absolutely heartbreaking. It was the first feature on a low budget, I did expect too much, and I always had to make compromises, but even in spite of the compromises, it ended up being a very visual piece.

TBOF: It obviously was a hard shoot, even with the support you both had from the crew, I could imagine that there were some pretty intense moments. What keeps the two of you working together as a team? In the context of the producer/director, the director needs to realise her vision, and then it must be tough on a producer with limited resources.

at the moment the most important thing is just having the space and the time to work on films

GA: We're friends so no matter what happens and as much as we might disagree on the film, we're still friends. And that's important.

VS: We met at film school, we have known each other for 5-years now, and we've become like sisters. We fight like cat and dog, We don't always like each other, don't get me wrong and it's hard and more often than not we've had enough of each other. But, at the end of the day, there's a bond there that has some meaning to it, so it actually never changes.

GA: I think also there's an understanding because we've worked together so long, we know how each other work. The project was fun. Most of the time, but it also has been very hard. Looking at the bigger picture, money has never really been the issue for us as a team, it would be nice to get properly paid some time, but at the moment the most important thing is just having the space and the time to work on films.

VS: I think that if you follow your heart and go with what you're really are interested in doing, the money will always follow.



On the set with Robert Sarkies

Nightmare Productions is a group of young, edgy filmmakers based in Wellington. They share their views with The Business Of Film, regarding the climate for funding and how they perceive the system.

A Rich Element of Black Comedy

The Business Of Film: Scarfies was the first feature film to come from the Nightmare Production stable. How do you both find the environment, within New Zealand to make movies?

Lisa Chatfield: Generally speaking we found the environment here to be really very positive, having had the opportunity with Scarfies to travel to spots all over the globe. I'm well aware that New Zealand's in a lucky position to actually have something like the Film Commission that operates as more than a location office, it's actually about supporting filmmakers and supporting film culture. I think that in the 22-years of the

100% Film Commission funded which gave us a huge learning curve and control

Commission's existence filmmakers' approach to The Film Commission has probably changed. Obviously it was great for us to be able to make our first film, almost 100% Film Commission funded which gave us a huge learning curve and control over everything that we did. Our plan at Nightmare Productions has always been to make bigger movies for an international market and that

will require international financing. I don't think that you should ever expect that one company or commission is going to help you make movies all your life. We're looking to the Film Commission for support now in terms of development. We need to get out of the country, and find other sources of finance for the next project. The commission have a level of development financing to help launch the project, and provide some money to go abroad and people like Lindsay and Kathleen at the Film Commission do have really good international contacts, which they share, and provide us with a lot of valuable information on the companies overseas. So far our experience has been really positive. After we have made another two or three or four films, I don't know. At the moment between new filmmakers and filmmakers who are looking to making their third, fourth, fifth feature, there is a big gap. You're either in the Peter Jackson league or you're a low budget filmmaker, the people in the middle are struggling.

TBOF: Do you think the new film fund is going bridge that gap?

Robert Sarkies: I see no reason why not. The way that it's set up, really forces it to bridge that gap, because you can't go to The Film Fund and ask for \$2- million to make your second film. You can go and ask for \$2-million to enable you to go to the worldwide marketplace and attract other support. The money is not available unless you

get overseas financing, or other support, I think it's a mature approach and an approach that is dealing head on with the problem of New Zealand being a country of largely first time filmmakers

The great thing for us is, we found success in our home territory with Scarfies

because our second time filmmakers have been successful first time round traditionally, with the exception of a few like Peter Jackson, have all gone overseas. Directors like Vincent Ward left because basically he couldn't find financial support here. And I'm sure if we were in his position where we had a raft of reasonably successful films behind us, artistically or otherwise and international focus on us, wanting to see what the next project will be, if we weren't able to get the money here at home in New Zealand to make the film of course we'd have to skip overseas. The great thing for us is, we found success in our home territory with Scarfies, and we've almost completed writing our next project. And it is conceivable that we will be able to attract money from The Film Commission that will aid us to get international notice.

"WE HAVE A VERY SMALL INDUSTRY HERE AND IT'S DIFFICULT FOR INDEPENDENT PRODUCERS, BECAUSE WE CAN REALLY ONLY MAKE LOW-BUDGET FILMS. WE ARE MAKING FOREIGN MOVIES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET, SO WE CAN'T WORK ON BIGGER BUDGETS, WHICH IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR US, BECAUSE ALTHOUGH NEW ZEALAND IS CHEAP FOR OFFSHORE COMPANIES, FOR NEW ZEALANDERS THE COST OF LIVING, THE COST OF EQUIPMENT AND OF FACILITIES IS VERY HIGH...I THINK WHAT WE NEED TO DO IS TO DEVELOP TWO STRANDS TO THE INDUSTRY HERE. WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO MAKE FILMS WHICH ARE VERY MUCH NEW ZEALAND FILMS, AND THE FILM COMMISSION OR TELEVISION NEW ZEALAND WILL HAVE TO KEEP A HAND IN THIS, OTHERWISE THESE FILMS ARE NOT GOING TO GET MADE. ON THE OTHER HAND WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO DEVELOP A COMMERCIAL STRAND TO OUR INDUSTRY IF WE WANT TO SURVIVE. BUT I THINK IT WILL BE A GREAT PITY IF THE FILM COMMISSION ENDS UP AS SOME SORT OF ARTS COUNCIL, MAKING FILMS THAT AREN'T COMMERCIALLY VIABLE."

Robin Liang 1988

LC: We work as a team with Robert's brother Duncan, Rob and Duncan co-write the films, and then Rob directs them and I produce them. In the last 10 to 15 years there has been a major change. The perception now is that New Zealand is a place you can come and make movies. We now have a real strength. The success of films like *The Piano* and *Once Were Warriors*, directors like Vincent and many others have helped international filmmakers consider spending money to film in New Zealand. Fifteen-year ago, if you're making a film in New Zealand, you might as well be making it in Fiji. Whereas now, people won't laugh at you if you say you're going to make a \$20 million film in New Zealand. Although *The Piano* wasn't made with local money, it was perceived by the industry outside of New Zealand as a risk somebody took that paid off. When people see that risks have paid off they feel more inclined to step in that direction. I think that The Film Fund combined with the changed international perspective of New Zealand will work together well for filmmakers in New Zealand. I think the caution that I feel with regard to The Film Fund at the moment, is the process to access finance from The Film Fund is very much through The Film Commission. So in terms of people who actually decide films get made, at this stage, there's no big change.

TBOF: *Since I have been here, there appears to be a renaissance of the Maori culture and a sense of burgeoning pride amongst Maori people in the film industry, and a need for them to have a place within the industry, as directly*

related to the success of Once Were Warriors. Aside from the complex multicultural, and socioeconomic canvass of New Zealand as a nation, the fact is that Maoris don't have a big say in making films, in front or behind-the-camera. So the success of a genuine New Zealand film, Once Were Warriors has not actually translated into any apparent benefit for the Maoris. As filmmakers, what are your views on this complex situation?

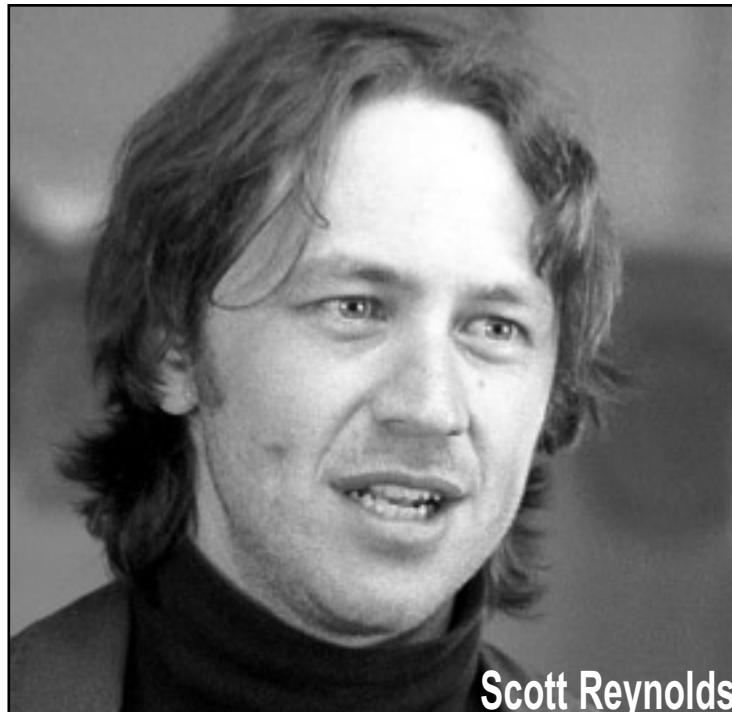
RS: I think the environment is very supportive towards Maori filmmaking. I think in The Film Commission charter there's a Maori component and I know in the past when I've been making short films I've always felt and sometimes wished that if I was a Maori, I could get finance from the politically correct people. I don't think it is anymore difficult for Maori to make films here, the problem is there's just not the opportunity. The problem that Maori has in filmmaking, is actually the problem that Maori has in most professional sectors. They're underrepresented; they're over represented in prisons, and underrepresented elsewhere including the film industry. I don't think that's because of a lack of support, there's certainly no resistance to the idea of Maori filmmaking. I find it really interesting that Maori theatre is actually strong in this country. There are plenty of Maori playwrights' and quite a strong vein of Maori Theater and yes, I agree that a similar vein does not exist in film. Occasional blood clots maybe, but not a vein, and certainly not an artery.

LC: In terms of putting Maori people in

front-of-the-camera, not just in terms of writing but in terms of directing and in terms of performance, you have to have those stories to tell and you have to have the writers able to write them, and I think that's something we struggle with nationally across the board, is writing and finding experienced writers. Partly because we don't have a strong drama tradition in this country on television so there's very little training for

something we struggle with nationally across the board, is writing and finding experienced writers

anybody, be he or she Maori or otherwise, there's not many outlets in terms of actually learning to write. There's not a number of Maori producers who can find Maori talent and work with them. Which I don't think is the only way to tell Maori stories but I think that's partly where the history of it lies. I think that there is an enormous push from young people at the moment just to make movies. It comes from a generation that's growing up with video camera and born out of the excellent short film culture that New Zealand has a reputation for. It's made making films pretty accessible to everyone.



Films - More like Architecture Than Art

*Scott Reynolds is recognized as one of New Zealand's talented directors. Like most New Zealand filmmakers, getting his projects to the screen is difficult, but Reynolds has a very personalized and subjective reason d'arte which he applies to himself, with regard to the making of movies. He shares these views shares The Business of Film while editing **When Strangers Appear** (AKA **Shearers Breakfast**) his latest project.*

The Business Of Film: **Bringing projects that are deeply personal visions to the screen, is it easy, or hard?**

Scott Reynolds: It seems to get harder with each film, which is interesting, because you'd think it would get easier. In some ways it is, but in some ways it's not. You can't make a film without shooting some bad footage, without stepping on toes, without offending someone, or whether it's just trying to get what you want on the screen. For me personally it's been a rough journey. I know that people have admired what I've achieved with what I've been given to make movies, but they don't realize the struggle, when people talk about the struggle it's always, woe is me, and I don't mean that at all. I mean that we make choices every day, and I made choices from day one that get harder, especially with the wolves at your door in between projects. I have a very simple policy which is I like to write. And when I've written

something that I think is good, I show it to people and if those people want to give me the money to make it or want to be involved, then I want to make it. I'm not saying I wouldn't and I'm not saying I

I have a very simple policy which is I like to write...when I have written something... I show it to people

won't be a director for hire, but I haven't done so yet. That purely because the only thing that drives me wants to tell a story. The only reason I haven't done somebody else's script yet is because I haven't been offered something that I thought was great, but also I'm low on the pecking order, I wouldn't be offered anything so it's a Catch 22

situation. That was originally why I started writing, because I knew no one was going to offer me scripts, so I better start writing them myself. I got the writing bug, and I have never let go. I wear two completely different hats.

I like being a writer and I like being a director. After I finish this film, I want to write. I won't to jump straight into another film. When I have written for a while I need a break, and vice versa. Like all filmmakers I am huge fan of Stanley Kubrick. The reason I really admire him is because of the fact he wouldn't make a film if he didn't want to. I like making films in New Zealand. I don't want to jump ship. Unless of course, it was something where it had to be shot in Italy. New Zealand is where my family is; it's my base. But it's hard making films here, because of the type of films I want to make, I actually don't know where I fit in in this country, either from the viewpoint of getting my films funded or the way the public

perceives them as well. But at the end of the day, none of that really matters. At the end of the day, we have too many people in New Zealand making excuses, or trying to explain away the way things are, for me, my life is much simpler than that, which is no matter what happens with this film or the next film or the last film, whether it's praised, whether it's slammed or whether it's gets lost on the shelf, I'll just write another script, and another. Maybe **When Strangers Appear** will be the one that will get slammed worse than the last one or will get praised more than the last one, I'll always just return to my computer and start again with another script.

What are the types of film I want to make that I think is difficult in New Zealand. When I say that I don't fit in, I'm not saying that it's everybody else's fault. I grew up in the cinema. As a kid I liked American films, people say to me in a derogatory way my films are very

When Strangers Appear is a character study that has no subplot and leaves holes and questions

Americanish, and I always take that as a compliment. I don't purposely write things either in New Zealand or not in New Zealand. When you write you create a world, so I create a world that is right for the story. In **The Ugly** and in **Heaven** and in **When Strangers Appear** it's an unnamed world that could have cars on the right hand side of the road, or the left-hand side of the road. I won't change a story to set it in a different world, for **When Strangers Appear**, the American backers wanted it set in America. The characters just drive on the other side of the road, they speak with a different accent and that's it. It's been hard because to a large extent to get funding from the New Zealand Film Commission, films have to appeal to the national box office, and I feel that my work suits international platforms better than national platforms but that's my fault, not anyone else's fault. I would love to keep making New Zealand films here.

Iwould love to speak with a New Zealand voice, but I think part of it is my New Zealand voice is different to "the new" New Zealand voice. Whatever I make, I try to push boundaries. I would rather take risks and fail than be safe – there are enough safe and normal movies made out there that I'm not going to spend my time adding to list. I'd rather try new stuff. I have another strange attitude in the sense where I don't know what's coming from me in the future, I don't know what's going to happen after this film, and I'm not panicking about it, because I've got my computer. If you took away my computer and didn't let me write, then I'd be devastated. It's my security blanket. I escape to it the same way people probably use drugs, or watch a

movie, listen to music. When I write I get lost in that place and I don't come out for days if necessary and it's wonderful.

When **Strangers Appear**, like my last project was funded without New Zealand Film Commission participation. When Sue Rogers (the producer) and I got turned down with the script, I wrote something else, then looked at it again and thought, there's something good here that I believe in, so I rewrote it, and got the funding from overseas. Originally I had too many characters, too many subplots, so I challenged myself to write a script that's taut, tight, with the minimal amount of characters. Take a minimal film like **Duel**, for example, just a simple story, guys in a truck. No subplots, extra characters, cut off the entire excess and just barrel forward. **When Strangers Appear** is a character study that had no subplot and leaves holes and questions. I want the audience to work when they go to see it. **TBOF: Everybody who sees your films comes away with something different. The complexity**

I FEEL THAT MY WORK SUITS INTERNATIONAL PLATFORMS BETTER THAN NATIONAL PLATFORMS BUT THAT'S MY FAULT, NOT ANYONE ELSE'S FAULT

of directing a story that has to be told in 90-minutes, and yet as a director, or individual, how do you feel that you have accomplished what you set out to do – it must be pretty hard.

SR: It is, it's hard – I hate directors who copy other directors. It's tough because I'm sure you could pull bits out of the things that I've made and any other director has made, and compare to other directors work. But at the same time, people always inspire me. I won't copy, but I do question if I can learn something from that inspiration, that triggers a different inspiration in me. I like for example, John Woo's **The Killer** would be one of my favorite films but there is no way in hell I would ever do a slow motion gun battle leaping in the air. As soon as he's done that, why would you

I'd rather be clean inside and believe–than dirty inside and have people think I'm a genius

want to rip it off? You can learn as much from things that you like and as much from things that you don't like, but you don't cook it up and just spit it out the same way again. I learn from movies, every day. I watch a lot of '70s movies. I'm very, if anything, my work is much more inspired by '70s films and by films of today. I'd

much rather watch a film like **The French Connection** than **Gone In 60 Seconds** with Nicholas Cage. What I liked about the '70s films was they spent a lot of time getting good characters together, they spent a lot of time introducing the people, get us, the audience to know the characters, and then put them in jeopardy. Don't just blow cars up for the sake of blowing cars up.

One of my standard favorites, is **The Marathon Man**. That's the stuff that I like, there's something raw about films in the '70s, and they broke out of their mold, and started taking risks. The great thing about making films it is artistic but it's not art, it's more like architecture than art. I don't put a Scott Reynolds film on the start of any of my films because I don't believe in that singular vanity credits. I wrote it and I direct it but it's an ownership by a lot of people. My job is to service the film; the film isn't there to service me. Everybody's job is to service "the story." It's like a child. You can either send your child to the school that you like

the best or the school that's best for them, and in the end you should do what's best for the child's interest. So I will happily cut scenes out, trim things, lose dialogue. I don't get precious about my films, and I will always greet suggested changes with open arms, I think that a lot of directors are scared to say that because they think it says that they're weak or that they don't know what they want or they're wishy-washy, but I think sometimes you're just too close. I'm strong about some things, but in fact, if I thought 10 percent of changes were right I'd make it because I'm working for the film, not for myself.

I'm very cautious about what my name goes on, and I'm very cautious about failing. If people don't like **When Strangers Appear** I don't personally care, because I believed in it so I'm glad my name's on it. Whereas, the opposite would be if I didn't believe in a movie and I made it and it was a huge hit, inside, it's a soul thing – my soul knows – I'd rather be clean inside and believe than dirty inside and have people think I'm a genius.

At the moment, in spite of the difficulties of having a stable financial environment to work within, I'd rather work doing something else than directing a film I don't want to direct.

When Strangers Appear is a Columbia-Tri-Star/Sony international release. German based Senator Films has German and German speaking rights.



John Barnett

Series Success Catalyst For Expansion

*South Pacific Pictures has had enormous success with **Shortland Street**. John Barnett, managing director, talks not only about his company but his views on Maori renaissance in context of his country and programming the company develops and produces.*

South Pacific Pictures is now owned by a consortium comprising of London-based Chrysalis Films; Force, a New Zealand based finance group, and Barnett himself is one of New Zealand's thriving successes. **Shortland Street**, a locally based soap opera and the company's jewel in the crown has aired over 2,200 episodes. Such is the success and popularity of the series that it's rarely out of the press or on the lips of the government of the day. Airing on TVNZ its advertising slots contribute 10% of the stations revenue. **Shortland Street** shoots 50 weeks of the year and the revenues from the production enabled the company to build a studio complex with four sound studios that are the permanent home of the series. In its 9th year the series grew out of the desire by the public funding body New Zealand On-Air for a long running series, that reflected the culture and dynamics of New Zealand's everyday life and culture.

*The key to the series
longevity and success
is its character
driven nature*

Shortland Street is sold internationally by Grundy and airs in a number of countries including the UK; Sri Lanka; Africa; the West Indies and Malta to name a few. The appeal and success of the series lies in the complex canvas of a country that is isolated by distance to the rest of the world, with an identity that stems largely from the Europeans and the indigenous Maori race, and the influx of the South Sea Islands. John Barnett said: "I think there's been a real lack of New Zealand drama on television. **Shortland Street** fulfils the need to keep our skilled

crews working, and the public awareness of what we are in New Zealand and in that sense it's been enormously successful. At the time we were dominated by as much as 90% offshore UK and US product, particularly drama and documentary. **Shortland Street** tapped into the New Zealand psyche and reflects and has reflected the world in which New Zealander's live -- the people, the make up of the population, the things we say and do. I think that **Shortland Street** has actually changed the way that people think about New Zealand and partly because of the production process, the way that we write and the people that we employ. It's often ahead of the society so that a **Shortland Street** story theme is likely to replicate itself in reality. We'll write an episode about a nurse's strike, there'll be nurses' strike. We also tackled doctor patient relationships. Recently at a medical conference the speaker said that **Shortland Street** was responsible and that the series created the environment in which the public think that all these relationships are okay. We treat all these topics responsibly but nevertheless we are in the press all the time as being an arbiter of taste. The series addresses suicide, homosexuality and lesbianism. When we first started selling the show in the UK the episodes were censored, partly because it was playing at 3:30pm in some regions so there was a concern about the elements. But they haven't cut any episodes in the last three or four years. The key to the series longevity and success is its character driven nature, the stories can be repeated but the characters change, and the characters bring a lot of dimension. There are some issues in which we do take a position. On **Shortland Street** the representation of Maori and Pacific Island people on the show are as positive role models. We've always had a high proportion of Maori and Polynesian actors and the stories reflect their lives and the changes going on in their lives."

Over the last ten to fifteen years the population complex of New Zealand has changed dramatically. Approximately seven to eight percent of the population is now made up of Asian people from China and Hong Kong, and the indigenous population the Maori are currently making a push for recognition and acceptance of their heritage. Aside from the Europeans, another group the South Pacific Islanders are the largest migrant group into New Zealand in recent years and they are also asserting and seeking recognition. Barnett commented: "If you look at the pattern of European migration over the last 15-20 years, it was overwhelmingly Anglo Saxon. 90% from the British Isles, a small percent from Northern Europe, mostly Dutch, and only recently have there been a more cosmopolitan approach. People came here by choice, and because

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and Maori did*

they were also dominant, they didn't have to consume themselves with questions of identity. If you look at Canada, the United States or Australia, people hang onto their ethnic origins. For a very long time, the only culture came from the British Isles, in that kind of environment, people don't have any sense of themselves and Maori did. Suddenly this emergence of the strength of the Maori culture meant that European's began to look at what is their culture. We began to assert our independence whether it was cultural or economic. I think there's much more of a view that we are a Pacific country and the influences that will affect us

are the things that will affect us in our world and that we have to have control of. The demographic studies suggest that within 30 years, 50% of the Maori population will have mixed. At present there is a very small percentage of full-blooded Maori and that changes the perception because in the voting laws there are separate seats. Maori can vote on a Maori roll, or European rolls. There is a choice. It ensures that there is always Maori representation in parliament. If you're 1/32 Maori you can opt to be on that role. You know, you don't have to be 50% or 25% Maori. In areas like the film industry there is no suppression. What the Maori is asserting is the right to have control over a number of the economic elements, pieces of land, and assets they want to control and determine how those are used.

There is a bit of a backlash from some Europeans who feel threatened by the fact that this renaissance is on the rise in the film industry, I've made this claim to the politicians, the proportion of Maori working in the film industry in

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front and behind-the-camera is disproportionately high, in the areas where they're talking about job creation, I would think that 20-30% of technicians and actors and key personnel are Maori, but in fact the Maori population is only 15% of the whole. More and more of the films that are being made and sold are reflecting the cultural diversity of New Zealand Maori, Polynesian, Asian. An example, we're making a team series, Nickelodeon Australia is an investor in it, but Nickelodeon International were interested in it and they asked us what proportion of cast would be non-European and I said well, most probably 20-30% and they said, "Oh, that's good." That makes it a lot easier for us internationally.

At South Pacific Pictures our writer's write these kinds of stories as a matter of course. I think that there are some Europeans who feel threatened because they don't feel that they've got a comparable culture, which sounds an odd thing because if your great grandparents came here from Scotland you don't necessarily feel that English culture's yours and you haven't been encouraged into any other culture, and when New Zealanders go abroad or when they talk about culture, it inevitably involves Maori culture. At the same time, another significant immigrant group that is Polynesian is also pushing for recognition. During the '60s we encouraged them to come and work in the factories in particular. And so the migration was very high. They, in a broad sense, conform to any significant migrant group going to any other country. There is a high aspiration in

terms of education because physically and half a generation away you still belong to a culture so you bring that with you. There is a rich Polynesian influence in music, fashion, certainly in sports, that is having a tremendous impact on New Zealand.

Many of New Zealand's kid's heroes, be it sport, music – are Polynesian, Samoa in particular because there's 120,000 of them. Samoa is split into two countries, Western Samoa and Eastern Samoa, which is an American colony and a lot of people from Eastern Samoa go to California and yet they're related to people in Samoa and so something happens in California like baggy pants or hats turned back to front and in about a week it's in Samoa, and about a week later it's in Auckland, so you've got a channel that's moving outside television, outside magazines, other influences, it's just these people moving up and down a channel. Hip-hop and rap, it too simply moves up and down this channel. In terms of New Zealand absorbing the continuing influx of Asians, Polynesians, and Eastern Europeans we're almost the same size as the UK, physically, and we presently have 3.8 million

WHEN YOU WERE HERE LAST, THERE WOULD
HAVE BEEN 500-600 FREELANCERS.
TODAY THERE'S 7,000 OR 8,000

people. If we had 6 or 7 million it wouldn't be a drain. People always want to go to the biggest city, but if you go into some of the second level cities, of 50,000 to 250,000 people, you'll find an infrastructure that was put in place, in some cases 50-60 years ago, when there was plenty of money. In a city like Christchurch, I think there's 300,000 people, you can kick a ball on the main street, there are houses and schools and roads and an infrastructure that would take another 150,000 people without even noticing. There are lots of provincial cities throughout the country where the lifestyle is very good and where the cost of living is not high. Proportionately, if we had another million migrants tomorrow and they all came to Auckland, you'd notice it."

The general migration of the population from overseas and the movement and need for programming is good for the general commerce of running a business anywhere in the world including New Zealand. Barnett said: "The rise in the demand by the networks for local production has been the significant factor, although the majority production in New Zealand at the moment is overseas funded and controlled. This is changing, Pacific Renaissance that has been here for the past seven years, making **Hercules**, **Xena**, **Young Hercules**, **Jack of All Trades**, **Cleopatra**, had up to 500 people working pretty much fulltime. That helped the growth of the industry phenomenally. When you were here last, there would have been 500-600 freelancers. Today there's 7,000 or 8,000. There has been a

huge amount of people who have only ever worked on **Hercules** and **Xena**, but they've been at work for seven years. **The Lord of the Rings** has 1500 people, a lot of offshore production taking place but I think the crew expansion is elastic. South Pacific Pictures has pretty much always got a production on the go. That means three crews plus **Shortland Street**. We'll find those people that is not a problem. There's a desire to bring overseas productions here and I'm supportive of that. But you can't make **LA Law** in Auckland, you can't make **Chicago Hope** in Auckland, you can't make **NYPD Blue**, you can make things that are set non-specifically or are set in a studio.

If we don't have a domestic industry, we won't keep those people. South Pacific as a company, used to be a service company. We used to do a lot of work with Atlantis. But in my view, once they're established that left us as a price taker rather than a price maker and so our approach here has been to create our own shows, own our copyright and export those. And that's been quite successful. In terms of the studio,

without **Shortland Street** we would never have built it. We're not in the studio business. We're in the production business, but the most efficient way to do it was to have our administration for **Shortland Street** on one location because the energy that comes off the show, involves and also informs, everybody else.

I think that our prognosis for the future is quite positive because although there are shifts and imbalances, and shifts and turns in the market – in the European market the cost of **Shortland Street** is covered by domestic because it's highly profitable for the network. We make a couple of series, and a feature, a couple of television features. Which all amounts to in a busy year, 40 or 50 hours. And that makes us very busy. We don't make anything unless it's being financed, so it's our job to come up with things that I can go and raise some money for and if we don't raise the money, then we can't make it. In New Zealand terms – indeed in Australasian terms -- we're one of the biggest volume producers. And I don't have concerns about our ability to continue like that. I think our growth will come out of Australia where we've got some quite aggressive plans. We have an office there that works on a development basis, we bought a number of Australian books as properties, which we are developing, and we've been working cultivating relationships with the networks there. Conscious of the Blue Sky ruling, and projects we're planning in Australia will be Australian productions in Australia, made by Australians."



Michelle Turner

Squeezing The Maximum From Every Dollar

Stickmen is Michelle Turner's first feature film as a producer shot in New Zealand. The producer of two highly acclaimed short films, which she produced in the UK. She shares her views on filming in New Zealand and the shift in attitude regarding on location shooting that now exists due to the influx of revenue into the country from *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

The Business Of Film: We have been talking to number of independent producers and whilst the passion for making films is very strong, it's also extremely difficult given financial resources and time, how did you find the experience?

Michelle Turner: Very tough. Because of the low budget nature, we wanted to put the maximum value on the screen, which we achieved and we are very happy with. However, one of the toughest things was getting into the six weeks shooting what we have accomplished on the screen. I think that was as tough on Hamish, the director, as it was on me. It was a low budget feature with about 45-contracted cast and about 26 locations. Looking back it was perhaps foolish, but the script called for it, It needed to be

We all felt strongly that we wanted to make a film that gave the public value

done. It was shot around Wellington, and we would like to think we have delivered a commercial film. The director and the writer both come from the background where we all felt strongly that we wanted to make a film that gave the public value. We think that ultimately someone's going to pay \$11 to be entertained and that it is our responsibility to make sure people think, Yes, I have had a good night out, I've got my \$11 worth. Hamish, the director, was very disciplined he had really done his homework. He asked for two weeks of rehearsals with all the key

actors, which on a low budget was quite tough, but I am so pleased we did that. It was the best money we spent. He was able to develop a relationship with them; they developed a relationship with each other. The film is about three mates bonding and becoming friends. For budgetary reasons three lead boys shared a flat together. Which worked just incredibly well, it could have backfired on us but it was great. They lived and played together, worked together, and that shows on the screen. The tough part about low budget features such as this is getting good crews, and the equipment you want and need. On this shoot we paid everyone marginally less than they might get on a regular job, not measurably, but still less. We squeezed the maximum from every dollar. One of the tremendous benefits of Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* production is that the public is so much more aware, the council in Wellington – are very film-friendly. They've got a specific person as a film co-ordinator, and she was amazing. They are very, very supportive and that helps. We went to a lot of bars and cafes, and the local people too were very, very supportive. We received a lot of support and the crew were really behind us; The Commission's being very supportive. It's a good project and that really helped. We were able to get some of the crew, who had just completed *Vertical Limit*, so everyone had paid off their mortgage for six months, and were happy to do work on a little New Zealand film they felt some passion for. That helped, if it had been lean times, I think we would have had a problem. The impact of Peter Jackson's production *The Lord of the Ring's* overall in the film community has been tremendous. Four years ago, if you wanted to film in the street people would be pissed off, there was

a lack of understanding, and now there's constant public awareness. The estimate is that six hundred million NZ dollars so far has poured into the country. That's bigger than the wine industry. The council has been quite instrumental in that,

As a result of Chris's [Brown] incredible support the financing came together fast

publicity-wise, saying, 'Look at the benefits.' It's not just the hassle factor, all the way down the food chain money's coming back in, people are much more aware, we don't mind if our regular customers can't park outside the shop for three hours. Overall it ended up being a good shoot, and I think that everyone is happy with the finished project. Chris Brown, the executive producer, has been the most amazing supporter of the film from day one. He helped get Richard Sheffield on board and they've been behind the project. One thing I know about Chris, wherever he is in the world he'll be talking about *Stickmen* and pounding the beat. As a result of Chris's incredible support the financing came together fast. There are five partners we had to deal with for the project, so it was nail biting to get the final words of commitment, but Chris was tremendously supportive through the whole process. Nick, the screenwriter, and Hamish and I have got another script in development. And I have also got a project from another director, which I hope to activate some interest at this Cannes Film Festival.

The Business Of Film: How does it feel, and what did you go through to write your first screenplay, which the industry in New Zealand is saying is a good tight script, that works so well in the genre for which it is intended.

Nick Ward: It took me a month to write the script. And we did eight months of re-writes. It strung out to be about a year, and we were actually into production, as we were still doing re-writes. Hamish the director and I worked on it together, before we began to look for financing. Because that's the way we wanted to do it, to make it ours, our idea. I learnt the minute you take a script to someone on spec, this is what I feel anyway, and they pay you money, they own it, they have a vested interest, and you have to listen to them. Hamish and I have been friends for a long time. He's worked as a director in the advertising industry as a copywriter in Australia. We both worked on a commercial together, a commercial I'd written, he'd filmed, and I told him I had this idea for a movie, he was very noncommittal about it, and eventually we got round to actually starting on it. There is a headset in New Zealand that we

make art house movies, but independent movies are our best movies, The way we make them. If you've got a movie at such and such a budget, it's an independent movie. What an independent movie is has shifted, independent movies are not about art house. Just because it's low budget doesn't mean you're going to make an art house movie. There are all these kinds of movies that work on a very low budget, to have a great story that's what it's all about. So rather than do an art house movie, we made a contemporary movie, and a commercial movie. It's unashamedly commercial. And it doesn't have an art house bone in its f----- body. So that was fun. I made some mistakes there's lots of characters lots of locations, there's lots of action. There's lots of dialogue lots of twists and turns and a few inherently New Zealand undertones, but it is a New Zealand story that everyone can buy into because its fun. I'm very proud of the final product. I did a lot of work at the script stage, when Hamish and I sat down as writer and the director, he would say That's great but I can't film that. Or he'd say, Look, I want to do this. Hamish would never say, write this. He would say, I need

to get from here to here, or this character needs to show some vulnerability. Which was great fun. And really good. So we fixed it up at the script stage, when it was buttoned down, and absolutely spot-on, we went into production. Because it was a good script, in some ways it made Michelle, our producer's life easier. In other ways it made her life harder, 50 characters and I don't know how many locations, but in the end it all worked out.

TBOF: What are the mistakes you think you made.

NW: The mistakes I made? Well, I wrote too many locations, I wrote too many characters. But I'm glad I made those mistakes, because those are good mistakes, It gives the movie a feeling, it's a movie about three guys and their adventures and the women they meet, and the game of pool that they play. But there's a bigger world, you get the feeling that these places that they weave in and out of, that when they leave them, the story still carries on with some of the characters, You feel that the characters intersect the story and they go away, it's not a story that happens in isolation. It moves through all these other stories, touches all these other people.

Independent Movies, Not Art House

*Nick Ward's directorial writing debut is **Stickmen**. Directed by Hamish Rothwell, and produced by Michelle Turner. Ward amusingly tells the tale what he terms 'rather embarrassingly' he tried to pass himself off as Vincent Ward, at 'a hard to get into restaurant', not realising that Vincent Ward of **The Navigator** fame was behind him. Always seeing the humour in everything to do with life. In Conversation with The Business of Film, he expresses his thoughts about writing a 'commercial' screenplay for **Stickmen**.*



Hamish Rothwell & Nick Ward



Yvonne Mackay

An Impression That Changes Our Lives

*Award-winning film and television director Yvonne Mackay's latest television telefeature **Clare** produced by Dave Gibson of The Gibson Group aired March 2000 on New Zealand On-Air to great critical success and won its time slot. In Conversation with The Business Of Film, she discusses how important she felt it was to tackle the subject matter, and the importance of the subject matter and bringing it to screen, and her thoughts about the process of directing.*

The Business Of Film: The story of *Clare* centres around a scandal within the New Zealand health system, which occurred in the late '50s, concerning cervical cancer, the system and social attitudes that prevailed back then and which to a great degree continues today, how and why did you want to direct such a sensitive and difficult subject?

Yvonne Mackay: It's a very strong woman's story, not only was it a huge scandal in New Zealand of a medical misadventure, but there was an amazing change in the actual woman getting the cancer, the real Clare actually said it was one of the best things that ever happened to her. It focused her mind. Clare never got her University entrance, she became a teacher, during the time studying as an adult student to be a teacher, she went to countless visits to National Women's Hospital and they never told her that she had the beginnings of cervical cancer and indeed during that time, and in the eight years afterwards, she hatched full blown cancer. She became the deputy principal of a very posh Auckland school for girls, she was diagnosed with cancer to such

an extent she needed a major hysterectomy and ray treatment and she came through all that. Chance put her in the right place at the right time, where she met Sandra Coney and Philidda Bunkle, who had been carrying on research for

*a huge scandal in
New Zealand of a
medical misadventure*

their own reasons at the National Women's Hospital. An obstetrics and gynaecological magazine published in America noted there had been a very strange study or trial conducted in New Zealand's major hospital for women. It was unheard of at the time to have your own hospital records, but Clare had hers because she was contemplating reporting the GP to the medical disciplinary committee. When Sandra and Philidda looked at her records they realised that

she was one of these women who had not been treated for nearly 20-years, and they could base their article about the unfortunate experiment at National Women's Hospital around her story. Clare wanted to be anonymous calling herself patient Ruth, but she still couldn't escape the publicity. Because now she had grown as a person who was very articulate and she was exactly right to tackle the fallout from the publication of the hospital trails. Then, in 1987, a nine-month Sylvia Cartwright Inquiry came back with an outcome. My story is about Clare Matheson taking the prime role in the inquiry when she finally takes the stand and refocuses enormous amounts of attention on the part of the administration of the doctors of the hospital as they try to cover up the details. A professor named Herbert Green decided that he would like to have his own trial, to see if CSI, which was indeed a precursor to cancer, if left untreated would become full blown invasive cervical cancer. At that time I think there was a kind of culture within the teaching hospital, it was attached to Auckland University, and I think

medical people were running their own interesting trials. Which was shocking, as they didn't criticise Green's so called experiment, just turned a blind eye. Because they certainly did know that was going on. Women were actually dying, certainly 28, but possibly there were more. Probably back in '66 it was probably okay then to be doing such a trial, but by the '70s the whole world knew about it.

TBOF: As a director, in tackling the subject matter, how have you approached it, is it about the power of "man" in that kind of situation or is it about "women" and our lack of being able to take our lives in our hands? About women in the lower echelon of society who were not educated enough?

YM: I definitely think the story shows both. It shows that the women that Clare Matheson represented were inarticulate and had faith in a health and medical system, which they never questioned, and that the doctors were gods. They just had faith that if they had something wrong they would be treated. They never thought that they should be consulted either. The professor was making statements about the fact that a woman wouldn't really understand which treatment she should have. My story is about an individual, who suddenly opened up the windows and screamed to the world, 'This is terrible and I'm not going to take it anymore.' But it also, I think, shows that we as a gender just weren't in a position really to be asking the right questions. I think there was another thing, too. This is not cancer of the arm. This is cancer of the cervix and it was that private area where women pointed and said, 'I've got troubles down there, and never actually verbalized it.' I think that it has a lot to do with that particular cancer. There was definitely a feeling that after

*as a gender just weren't
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the right questions*

the introduction of birth pills in New Zealand those women were more sexually aware and doctors would sometimes say promiscuous. Part of what happened with Clare was, she looked as if she came from a certain class in New Zealand. Judgements were made that she was Catholic, she wanted to have more children, she must have somehow been a naughty girl at some stage and there are some lovely embarrassing questions that are asked of the woman: At what age did you have sexual intercourse? How many sexual partners did you have, these very intrusive questions were asked when she attends the hospital. So there's the aspect about being ashamed of your body and ashamed of yourself, that you actually brought this disease on

yourself? It wasn't just a disease. Our story is set over the '60s, '70s, and '80s. When she takes the stand, it's 1987, hundreds of women don't know if they have got it, still hadn't been treated, who had to be recalled at the end of the inquiry. The hospital trial was still going on. Directing the piece was an interesting balance between a documentary and drama piece. The reason that Television New Zealand and New Zealand On-Air wanted it was in mid-October 2000 very similar situations occurred in New Zealand. People were saying didn't we learn any lessons from the 1987 inquiry and have we forgotten them? They wanted to keep the truth of that. I wanted a personal story of a woman who was the key patient, her drama to be

NUNS CAN'T GET IT...VIRGINS CAN'T GET IT... THEY DON'T TREAT THE MALE

gripping for the audience to become involved with her. It also had to be very subjective from her point of view. Stylistically we've shot many very large close-ups of how hard it is to have speculums put up inside you, with a team of young keen doctors standing around. We've gone for the drama and for the shocking side of it. The very interesting aspect about cervical cancer is that you can only get it from a man who has the wart virus on his penis. Nuns can't get it. Virgins can't get it. Further they don't treat the male. They treat the female, and in our film, they actually say why they don't treat the male. They don't treat the male because the little white wart virus on the penis is hard to find and men don't know they've got it. They pass it on to every female that they have intercourse with. The only way that it's ever been really discovered is that – a man called Richart in a New York hospital said that you have dip the penis for at least five to ten minutes in vinaigrette and then the tiny little wart virus shows up. He simply says in the film and on the stand in the real inquiry, that no male wants to pursue this type of treatment. It's too mind-boggling for him. So, they wait until women get it and then we're the ones that take the treatment. A lot of women didn't know that, it was brought out in the inquiry.

TBOF: An incredibly challenging directorial thing for you to do.

YM: I thoroughly enjoyed it actually and I think it's a really necessary story that needed to be told. My theory on being a director is that I'm just a catalyst with what given material is presented to me on that day. In *Clare*, one of the most extraordinary things was, there was 40 other extra roles in it in the crowd scene. That crowd, of just people who were brought in for the day, had such an incredibly dynamic experience. They cried, they gasped. And then there was the crowd of women, what we call the women survivors, an enormous number of them

Maori and Polynesian for Clare's main speech, when she was saying, 'I'm standing here for the women. I'm not here because I wanted revenge on a hospital. I'm here today because of the women who are still out there suffering and the ones that are in front of me now.' There were tears streaming down their faces. And one of the most incredible things that happened was we brought the real Clare in for the last day of filming which happened to be Clare's major speech, she sat there for the first take, and she could not cope with the retelling of her life and her suffering and raced out of the room That suddenly brought it to the crew that although we'd been filming drama, this was somebody's real life. As a director what goes through my

mind is capturing the moment of each scene. It can be just a look or an emotion. I know that a movie is an ongoing telling of the story but sometimes I'll walk away from a feature film and it will only be one or two moments in that

*They don't treat the male
because the little white
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is hard to find*

movie that I'll remember for the rest of my life. I think that all our lives are made up of little moments in time when we either went this way or that way or something made such an impression that it changed our lives.

*Award-winning film and television director Yvonne Mackay began directing television drama in 1974 following a stint in radio. She emerged as one of New Zealand's most prolific directors, creating more than 100-hours of programming for TV-NZ. Mackay became a partner of The Gibson Group in 1979 directing a variety of television programming including several award-winning children's television drama specials, the award-winning *The Silent One*, the primetime mini-series *Typhon's People*, *Bungay on Crime*, *Undercover*, *Close to Home*, *Safer Sex*, *Public Eye*, *The Ballet of Jean Batten*, various episodes of the longform *Duggan*, and most recently the telefeature *Clare*.*

*Mackay is actively involved in the development of a number of feature scripts that she will direct for release through First Sun, The Gibson Group's associated division dedicated solely to feature film production, that include *Mandarin Summer and One Moment* (AKA *Castle of Lies*), to be directed by Mackay, *This Virtual Life*, *Second Hand Rose*, *One for the Road* and *Leo and Me*.*

Blending Comedy & Drama

*First time feature film writer and director Vanessa Alexander's **Magik + Rose**, achieved the status that all film directors and producers dream of -- 'word of mouth.' The 'word of mouth' catapulted the ultra low budget movie into the ranks of achieving good domestic return for its theatrical release in New Zealand. What, for her were the benefits and drawbacks of shooting an ultra low budget film on an impossible 22-day shoot.*



Vanessa Alexander

The Business Of Film: You wrote and directed this movie which cost very little money comparative to what you put on the screen. The film had legs and ran a good six months on theatrical release domestically in New Zealand. What do you think is the quality that you managed to capture in that film, as a director, that captured the imagination of the film going audience?

Vanessa Alexander: One of the things that are really good is the performances. They are strong and believable. The comedy is played in quite a naturalistic way so it blends between comedy and drama and it works quite well. We rehearsed for nearly as long as we shot. And I think that really shows. We shot it in 22 days, we were really moving to get it done. We just couldn't afford to be messing around on the day to get the performances right. The cast was great and we stayed rehearsing sometimes on the off days during the shoot I think that made a huge, HUGE difference. Maybe if we'd made it for more money we wouldn't have rehearsed it as much, maybe it wouldn't have been as good.

TBOF: You received a lot of commitment, help and involvement from the cast, and producer Larry Parr, do you think that added to the passion and fulfillment on the screen?

VA: When we went into it, I was really worried that basically we were paying people such an incredibly low amount of money that they might be bitter and resentful. But basically because you're not paying people great money, the only people that are prepared to become involved are people who actually really believe in the film. So we had the reverse of what I imagined. We shot

this movie in the middle of nowhere! We all lived together, roomed together. The crew that came together really wanted to make this movie. The West Coast where we filmed is very beautiful and most of the commercials that are shot in New Zealand are filmed there. But nobody had actually come to shoot a film about the actual place, the people in the community just bent over backwards to help out. Because in the community that all know each other. We would into the pub full of farmers, and sit down with them and go, 'You know anyone that's got.....' and they'd be like 'Oh, yeah. My brother's brother.' They got us the most amazing stuff.

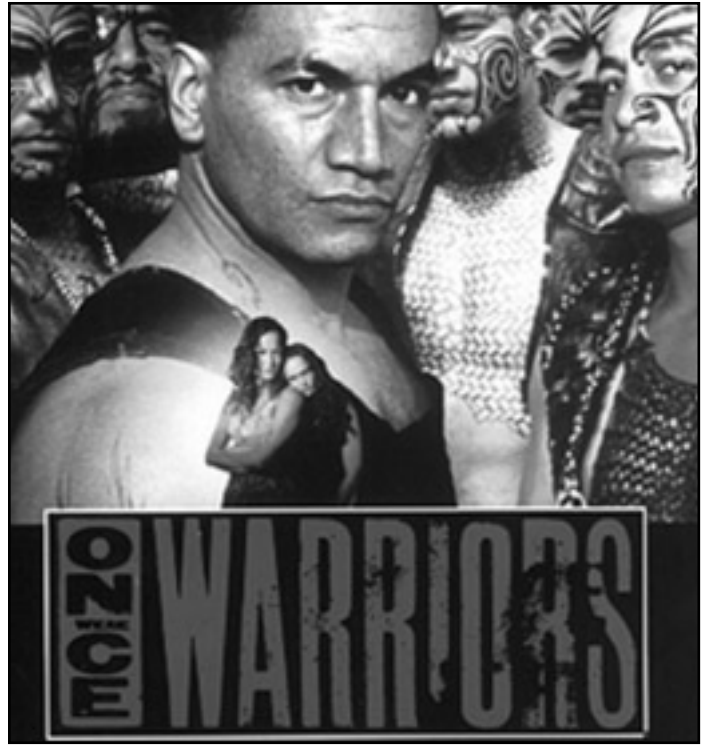
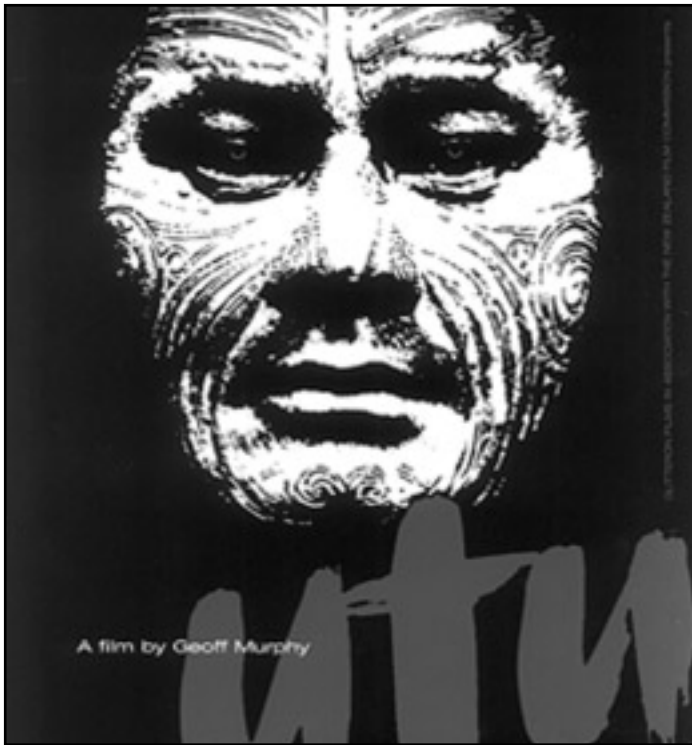
TBOF: It is usual for a first time writer/director to shoot their own project? How did that come about? Was it the sheer determination to direct your own feature?

VA: I think you do have to be quite determined about it. My record before I went to film school was as a writer so I had quite a solid track record as a playwright. What happens is that every group that you come into contact says, 'Oh, great. A writer. Write us a script and we'll give it to somebody else.' I think you really have to stick to your guns, it about people perceiving you as being capable, it's tempting to think somebody else can direct it, and eventually they'll see the light. I decided that that wasn't the case – that they would never see the light. I just refused to go down that path. Larry Parr was great, I spent a lot of time with him during the writing of **Magik + Rose** and he never, ever suggested that anybody else direct it. Good on you Larry. There's seems to be quite a shortage of people who can write, because I'd won a script award when I was at film school in Melbourne and then I won that International Student

Playwriting competition, when I was at University, because the number of writers is so few, any kind of acclaim helps. The film was funded at about third draft, the end of the film takes place at The Wild Food Festival which is this crazy event where they cook sheep's testicles and all kinds of interesting things. Fourteen and a half thousand people attend this festival each year. It's a legend. The end of the film happened at this festival, and there was no way that we had a budget to mock it up, the event took place in March, Larry had agreed to fund it maybe seven months before, so during that time I went through a whole bunch more re-writes.

TBOF: You now have your first work under your belt. On your next project, which I'm sure must be in the works, will you write and direct it again?

VA: Having shot **Magik + Rose**, having shot so much for no money, it exhausts you, drains you, with the release and the promotion which I also got involved in. It was really important to me when I started writing my next screenplay, that my main consideration wasn't the budget. I just wanted to write what I wanted to write. Because, you know, I felt really limited as a writer on **Magik + Rose**, I do want my next script to be different, but I feel, in the end, it's easy to say, I will absolutely not compromise, like the food festival, that was a compromise that I wasn't prepared to make. If this next film looked like I couldn't make it for less than \$6-million, if I can't raise the money, then perhaps the compromise is to write something else, or perhaps it's to change that idea. The next script is about a romance novelist. It's a period piece set in 1894, **A Life In Romance**. Which I would like to also produce myself on a budget of around \$NZ5-million.



Celebrated Maori

The majority of international filmgoers who saw **Once Were Warriors**, **The Edge** and **Mulholland Falls** are probably unaware that the talent behind-the-camera, Lee Tamahori is an internationally renowned Maori director. Originally, he trained as a commercial artist and photographer before entering the local film industry late in 1970 as a boom operator, becoming an assistant director a decade later. He went on to make award-winning commercials as well as directing numerous local NZ-TV series. The first major feature film he directed, **Once Were Warriors** became an international cult-hit and New Zealand's highest grossing film. It went on to win the PEN First Book Award of New Zealand as well as various international awards as Best Film at the International Fantasy Film Festival; Grand Prix des Ameriques at the Montreal World Film Festival, and The Anicaflash Prize at the Venice Film Festival. The screenplay, written by Riwia Brown, a noted Maori writer, and more than 50% of the cast was Maori, tells the dramatic story of a family descended from Maori warriors but bedeviled by a violent father and the social problems of being treated as outcasts. In 1996, Tamahori came to America and directed **The Edge** starring Anthony Hopkins and Alec

Baldwin; followed by **Mulholland Falls** with Nick Nolte, Melanie Griffith, Rob Lowe and Andrew McCarthy. He also directed episodes of the television series **The Sopranos**. During the past two years he directed **Along Came a Spider**, **In Search of the Assassin**, **Basic** and **10th Victim**. Previous feature films he directed or participated as second unit director or assistant director in New Zealand include: **Race for the Yankee Zephyr**, **Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence**, **Wild Horses**, **The Silent One**, **The Quiet Earth** and **Thunderbox**.

Equally as famous as Tamahori is Maori actor Temuera Morrison, nephew of the renowned Kiwi entertainer Sir Howard Morrison. Temuera was cast in **Once Were Warriors** and appeared in many diverse feature films such as: **The Grasscutter**, **The Island of Dr. Moreau**, **Little White Lies**, **Speed Two**, **Cruise Control**, **Six Days, Seven Nights**, **What Becomes of the Brokenhearted?** **Vertical Limit** and **Star Wars: Episode II**. He made numerous television appearances in movies-of-the-week on **Gloss**, **The Panel**, **Adventurer**, **New Zealand at War** and **From Dusk 'til Dawn 3**, and was language advisor on the 1993 award-winning **The Piano**, as well as acting in the Maori cast.



Lindsay Shelton

Aspiring To Achieve Two Contradictory Aims

Lindsay Shelton has retired from The New Zealand Film Commission where he spearheaded the sale of New Zealand films into the international marketplace since 1979. He first attended the Cannes Film Festival in 1980, and it would be true to say that, throughout his career, he has been an ardent ambassador of New Zealand films worldwide. Highly regarded and respected amongst the international film community, Shelton will be missed amongst us for his humour and demeanour, which underlies a quiet determination and strength of character. Articulate and highly informative on New Zealand films, and their position in the worldwide market. In Conversation with The Business Of Film, he gives his views on the changes in the international film industry, and his perspective of New Zealand films over the last two decades.

The Business Of Film: Lindsay let's talk about your own personal views, and perspective. How have aspects of the worldwide industry overall changed? How have films changed? How has the industry changed?

Lindsay Shelton: The industry's changed I guess in ways, which everybody now recognizes. It's a bit liked that song from American Musical Theatre: "I'm Still Here Through Changing Trends." When I started, there were many small, active, successful independent theatrical distributors. They started to diminish when video came, video rose and started underwriting theatrical deals, then video fell, and television started underwriting theatrical deals. During that time, the number of independent theatrical distributors started to shrink as well to the current period, which everybody has to deal with. Television, notably in the UK and Germany, which used to be a strong and enthusiastic buyer of films such as ours from New Zealand, has virtually stopped scheduling films such as ours.

The mix of television in countries like the UK and Germany no longer features the diversity, which can come from films such as independent New Zealand films. With the withdrawal of television

*we'll always have to
fight for visibility and
we're fighting now*

from that involvement, the ability of a number of small theatrical distributors to carry on has been eradicated. The theatrical distributors who have survived, and who have been able to maintain television connections, have maintained their television connections mainly in terms of more mainstream movies. So that's the major change. We've always had to compete with everybody else, it's always been tough, and we'll always have to fight for visibility. And we're fighting

now. We're certainly fighting on a tougher open field. The theatrical marketplace is a fun space, where fortunately there are still many like-minded people trying to enable good films to be seen. But the options are definitely smaller. As I go through the list of theatrical distributions, country by country with Kathleen Drumm, the Commission's International Sales & Marketing person, one recognises the number of distributors in New Zealand has always been small, but the number of distributors now in Australia is almost as small as the number of distributors in the US. The good sign, however, is that the US theatrical market does seem to be livening up again, new players are coming in and new possibilities are emerging.

TBOF: Do you think that this scenario will have any impact on the type of films that The Film Commission will or will not make or invest in?

LS: The Film Commission is trying to back films which will achieve two different aims, you might say we're trying to back films which are aspiring to achieve two contradictory aims. On the

one hand, we're aiming for domestic success and this has been our particular focus since Ruth Harley became chief executive officer. She has taken the view, which is very understandable, that if we're investing public money in films, then it's public money from the New Zealand public and therefore we should be trying hard to please the New Zealand public and that's the particular aim, with two notable successes in the recent past – **Scarflies**, which went over the million dollar level at the box office and **What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?** admittedly a sequel to the most successful film ever, **Once Were Warriors**, but nevertheless a huge domestic success. At the same time as those films have had very substantial domestic success, however, they haven't achieved as much international success as some of their predecessors, but if you look at some of the New Zealand films from earlier time which had substantial international success then they didn't necessarily have domestic success. It's called a dilemma, So we're working our way through that. In the meantime, we identify a number of New Zealand genres which have always worked well, I've been in the curious but happy situation of selling every New Zealand horror film that's ever been made and so I can speak from experience over 20-years that there is a strong international market for horror films from New Zealand. Some other genres from New Zealand don't have such a strong international appeal. But horror, even in 2000, with **Scarflies** we have the ability to sell it everywhere. I guess that if one looks at the shrinking number of theatrical distributors, and the shrinking number of independent video distributors, which is where the deals are made among the small numbers of people who have survived are those who have continued to be able to tap a fervent audience in their territories for

I take the rather perverse view. I think that a film can be successful regardless of its budget

horror films. Why there is an audience for horror films in most territories in the world, perhaps somebody else can explain that, not me. I was looking at a German catalogue the other day, offering a huge range of horror to German audiences. Obviously because there's a target market for it. Speaking from the point of view of what films from New Zealand can earn for their investors, whoever the investors are. Determining budget level is a very realistic level in terms of what a successful film can earn. It also happens to be a level which is in New Zealand dollars - \$NZ2-million. This is also a level which is in the capacity of the Commission to risk three, four or five times every year. So that level makes sense. It

would be beyond the Commission's financial resources to put up a more substantial amount. It doesn't have the money. Also, it doesn't make sense in terms of what films can earn. So I take the rather perverse view. I think that a film can be successful regardless of its budget. Having said that, however, one has to absolutely acknowledge that the survival of any film industry is only going to be there if the filmmakers are reasonably rewarded for what they're doing. I was just reading something that Geoff Murphy said about the '60s and '70s, which was, because there was no money and no market, people were making films just because they were passionate about making them. You can only sustain that for so long. Maybe during the '80s, Geoff was working some of the time from that point of view, but he later reached the point of view that if he was going to continue as a filmmaker for the rest of his life, he wanted to have some rewards and that's when he decided to go off and make the most unlikely decision to go and work in Hollywood.

TBOF: Do you think New Zealand filmmakers are better off today than they were ten-years ago, when the recognition and success the films have enjoyed started to take a hold, both domestically and internationally?

LS: Yes I do, for a number of reasons. First reason, there is The Film Fund as well as The Film Commission's money, which means there is more money inside New Zealand available to invest, than there was. Secondly, the New Zealand film industry has achieved its modest place in the world and therefore if you're a film producer going out in the world looking for some investment, you have a better chance of attracting it because of the record of what's gone before. And thirdly, and probably most importantly, there is now a body of film work here on which filmmakers can build, instead of making films in a complete limbo, which seemed to be the situation when Geoff Murphy, Roger Donaldson and the others started going overseas. The pre-history of films made New Zealand negligible. Now there is a library of over 200 feature films made here. I believe that the 200 films made here are still not a big enough sample to judge the style of New Zealand. I still think that style is very diverse. We're diverse. The more substance that the film industry can gather, then the greater chance it has of identifying the recognizably unique elements which make films from a place like New Zealand different from anybody else's, and it's that point of difference that has always been the centre of our successful movies, the point of difference where a film from New Zealand could only have come from New Zealand for one reason or another. If you judge our style, and I believe it's too early to say what our overriding style is, if you look at our most popular film ever, it's **Once Were Warriors**, which is social realism. On a real subject of real concern to real filmgoers. Presented in a cathartic way, that's our most successful movie. And our second most successful

movie and the best also came from the pen of the same writer and also was a complete Maori story. So certainly most of the films indicate that our strongest domestic successes have come from a Maori writer, Maori stories and Maori content.

TBOF: Does that say something about the whole country?

LS: Well, yes it does. A city like Auckland, for example, our biggest city has, a unique surroundings and its scenery is breathtaking. The fact that makes Auckland such a fascinating city these days is that it's the biggest Polynesian and Maori city in the world. And the contributions on every level made by the Maori community and the Polynesian community in Auckland are what make Auckland such an integrated place. And also, many of the human rights issues that the Maori people are fighting for, like ownership of their land, wanting to see themselves on television, hear themselves on the radio, are in fact issues that are equally important for non-Maori New Zealanders as well, because we all feel an affinity for the land, and if we are listening to the radio, or looking at television in New Zealand and what we see is mainly from somewhere else, then the issue of seeing ourselves or hearing ourselves is important to New Zealanders. I think we find that Maori rights issues that are being fought so effectively these days through the New Zealand legal system by young Maori lawyers, if and when they can achieve what they're achieving, this is something which benefits not just the Maori people but benefits all of the people of New Zealand as well.

human rights issues...Maori people are fighting for... issues that are equally important for non-Maori New Zealanders

*Lindsay Shelton retires this Cannes Film Festival as marketing director of the New Zealand Film Commission where he has worked since 1979 handling international sales and marketing of more than 80 NZ feature films, starting with **Goodbye Pork Pie** which he sold to over 50 countries. He remains at the NZFC as a consultant. Other titles that he sold were **An Angel At My Table** and **Once Were Warriors**, for release in more than 60 international territories. Shelton introduced New Zealand's film industry to the world by organizing participation at Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Toronto and New York film festivals as well as the international markets of AFM and MIFED.*

He is founder of the Wellington Film Festival and also acts as chairman of the NZ Federation of Film Societies and as president of the Wellington Film Society with a membership of more than 2700. In the New Zealand 2000 Honors he became a Member of the Order of Merit for his services to film.



Images from One Moment AKA Castle Of Lies

Communicating Directly To The Audience

The Gibson Group, is a joint partnership between director Yvonne Mackay and producer Dave Gibson. In 1998 they established a feature film division First Sun, a division within the group through which all Gibson Group's future feature films will flow. The company currently has a number of projects that it is developing. **One Moment**, AKA **Castle of Lies**, which Mackay will direct, has secured the majority of its financing from both New Zealand and EuroArts in Germany. Mackay holds the distinction of being the first female director from New Zealand when she directed **The Silent One** back in 1984. Her directorial debut garnered a host of international prizes. Mackay enjoyed the experience of making a feature, but got sidetracked for a long "moment." On a visit to MIP-TV with Dave Gibson, in The Gibson Group's infancy, the duo realised there was an ever expanding market for children's television programming. The company diverted to television programming and Mackay broke the ground in directing a number of very successful programmes for the international marketplace for the group. Mackay said, "There came a point when Dave and I got the feeling that we started to be the Mr. &

Mrs. Disney of New Zealand and we really had to quit and do other forms of programming. My aspiration was to for high quality television drama, and Dave's was to get more into the comedy. So every time I wanted to work on a feature film script. I would be thrown back into directing telemovies or a television series. I realised that if I

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didn't actually start to concentrate on getting a bunch of feature film scripts actually finished so they could be financed, I was never going to make another feature. **Clare** was intended to be a feature film. The Film Commission decided not to finance it as a feature so it became a telemovie. But I'm not going to let that happen to any of the other features that I now have on this slate. I just like the idea of having the chance to play with the big boys and girls again in the big budget arena. There is

another very deep personal feeling, and the industry should not associate Dave with this and that is I find it very difficult as a director to make a project for television and find that I can't control it when it is aired. Some of my projects have sat on the shelf for two years, until the powers that be decide they are relevant. I can't control where they are screened, what is screened against them, and essentially who gets to watch them. It is very frustrating. With the big budget projects, they always demanded overseas money, and I felt proud of the fact that we had the wherewithal to pull in large amounts of money from Britain or Canada, and it was not appreciated in New Zealand. We would produce the first year or two of a series and find the plug pulled locally, when the overseas broadcasters were waiting to go with the next series. It broke my heart, because I did a lot of the pilots that actually got us the series. I would hand them on to other people and get on with the next one. So why do I think feature films will be different? I think that I as a director I will have more power. I think that directors, if they've got it right, know who their audience is, and if you don't mess it up you are able to get to that audience without programmers and schedulers standing



Images from One Moment AKA Castle Of Lies



A lot of people talk about the need to make indigenous films, and I think if that means making films that are strongly based in New Zealand and yet have universal appeal, then that's fine. But some people think that indigenous films mean feature films, costing several millions of dollars, being made and released just for a domestic market which is unable to sustain such pictures. We have never mad and have no particular interest in making a film from an American script where they've come to us because we're cheaper.

- Dave Gibson, 1988

between you and the audience. With **The Silent One**, a children's family film, it enjoyed a theatrical release all around the world. It got as far as Russia and China, and that is where I wanted it to go. I want to get back into the situation of when I'm making a movie, I'm thinking about my audience and I want to sit in the cinema with the audience and see the film.

The Gibson Group is made up of different television producing compartments within the group itself. The duo's concern was that, in taking the path to concentrate on First Sun as a theatrical division, international financiers might have pigeonholed them into the groups prolific television activities or the 'television' mold. That has not been the case, in the last year during which

*I want to sit
in the cinema
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Dave Gibson has been promoting, in the international arena, **The Irrefutable Truth About Demons**, First Sun's first feature directed by Glenn Strandring which first showcased at Cannes 2000. Mackay continued, "We have a good strong solid group that does a number of different programming, and First Sun is actually a further progression." The first project Mackay will be

directing is **One Moment** (AKA **Castle Of Lies**) based on a true story of one of New Zealand's politicians at the end of the 19th century. When he was 60 years of age he married a young girl, his third wife, who cuckolds him with his son. Mackay takes the storyline of the triangle, from the point of view of what it was like to be the young wife with an older husband who she thought was fantastic, and then meeting the son, the young version of him and finding him far more interesting.

Mackay commented, "It's going to be a very erotic film. I actually want to make a very brave film sexually. This story was interesting to me because I discovered that it all took place at the time of the suffragette movement in New Zealand. We look at Connie from a young woman's point of view, who thinks this is her way to power. To make a contribution to the world is to partner herself with a man who is a politician, and finds in fact that she's more interested in following her career as a painter, but also falls in love and discovers herself and her own sexual identity, her own empowerment, decides to go it her own way and have neither man. **Mandarin Summer** is very sensuous, **One Moment** is erotic and very sexy." Both films, which Mackay will direct for First Sun, will have a dramatic sexual and sensuous undertone. Does Mackay feel she is, at a moment in her life, when she wants to express personally the suppressions she feels exist in society? "Yes," she replied. "When you get to be the age that I am, you are not afraid anymore, and feel that these situations should be put up there on the screen, to be discussed openly and expressed and experienced."

Dave Gibson's entertainment career began in 1974 when he started producing and directing television educational programmes. The '80s saw him move into drama and comedy with projects such as **The Haunting of Barney Miller**, the telefeature **Undercover**, and the feature film **The Silent One**. In the '90s, Gibson joined The Gibson Group, one of New Zealand's independent film and television companies, where he produced the primetime drama mini-series **Typhon's People**, co-produced two series of international children's drama **Mirror, Mirror** and four series of the New Zealand comedy show **Skitz**.

*on the screen,
to be discussed openly
and experienced*

More recently he has produced the long-running **Duggan** telefeatures and **Tiger Country** for TV3. In 1998, First Sun, a division of The Gibson Group, was established to concentrate solely on feature film production in association with partner/director Yvonne Mackay. First Sun's debut feature **The Irrefutable Truth About Demons**, produced by Dave Gibson, premiered at the Cannes Film Festival 2000. Gibson serves on the board of the New Zealand Drama School, was inaugural chair of the NZ Independent Producers Guild and chaired the first NZ Film and Television Conference in 1992.



Larry Parr

A Chain Of Empowerment

*Larry Parr is one of New Zealand's most prolific entrepreneurs, with a long list of films on which he has worked both in production and behind-the-camera. The Business Of Film last interviewed him in 1988, at the time he headed Mirage Films and attended the Cannes Film Festival with **A Soldiers Tale**. On a windy wet day in December 2000, The Business of Film once again caught up with Larry Parr.*

TBOF: Its been a while, what have you been up to? Talking to Don Selwyn on location of *The Merchant of Venice*, he told me you were part Maori, do you speak the language?

Larry Parr: I speak Maori pretty fluently, I wouldn't say I was 100% fluent, but I speak it better than most Pakeha. Neither of my parents speaks Maori.

Actually, what have I been doing - I've been hibernating for awhile. What has occupied me over the last two years is this idea for doing a series of ultra low budget films, which the Film Commission has supported and the first two of those films have been pretty successful. **Hopeless**, the first, we shot for \$NZ150,000 and it's had a spin-off in the form of a 26-half hour television series. **Hopeless** is a character-based series, we call a characom, and it's like a sitcom but lots of comedy. It's funded by

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TV 3 New Zealand On-Air, Hopefully, in an ideal world, if it works here, it'll go to a second series, It won't go to a second series unless I get some overseas income, because New Zealand On-Air will reduce their contribution next time round and as a result of that, it'll be difficult for the series to make a return.

From my point of view it was a good result from the first of these low budget films. The second is a film called **Magik + Rose**. Vanessa Alexander who wrote and directed the film is incredibly talented. It has taken \$NZ300,000 at the box

office, a number of people have seen it and it's launched the career of the young woman who will go places. The third is **Kombi Nation**, which was shot in Europe last summer. It's about a group of Kiwis travelling around Europe in a Kombi van. We shot guerrilla style around \$NZ300,000, four actors driving around in a Kombi van, they slept in the van and a crew of six that followed them around in a bus which had the equipment. Ron Lapoot directed it. He has already directed a couple of shorts that did really well at markets. Because we've been tied up with the series, we've been struggling to get scripts so we didn't make a film in 2000. However, during 2001 we hope to be shooting at least three. We are also working on and developing two or three bigger budget projects. Hopefully, we will have at least one of those near to ready sometime in late 2001.

TBOF: You have been brought on by The Film Commission to specifically encourage more Maori filmmaking. It's an important step, why is it so necessary, surely its difficult for any filmmaker to make films anywhere in the world.

LP: Any way you care to look at the numbers, there are insufficient Maori in key creative roles, producing, writing and directing in our industry. It's a fact. And if you take me and my extended whanau (family) out of the mix, because I work with two young producers, one of them my son, and a young woman, both Maori. If you take the three of us, and factor the mix, the numbers look a hell of a lot worse. I felt for some time that there was a need to address that, and we've gone about it in a logical and reasonably conservative way. Martin Bennett is the Maori writer who wrote the screenplay for Jubilee. He's Australian Film and Television School trained. He and I have been running a 12-month writing workshop for 20 writers in Auckland and

Wellington. There's been a drop-out rate because they haven't met deadlines, so, its down to five, I don't know how many scripts we'll end up with, but that's how we are addressing the problem of lack of writers. We have set up scholarships to send Maori to film schools because I think we need to concentrate our efforts in the area of key

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creative. Because they will create Maori projects that more Maori will be involved in. With regard to the Film Commission and The Maori Education Trust, I'd like to see us try and expand the contributions to it, and be able to access more money. There's a limit to how much I can achieve with my job, because my first responsibility now is to develop the people that I already earmarked as being worthy. And to some extent, I can actually achieve a better result this way, because the more people that I empower then the more they in turn can do. It's all very well running initiatives but at some point, you have to actually give people the opportunity and that's the two edged sword. They don't have enough experience, or the Maori script is not good enough, so they don't get the money and we don't get the new people coming into the industry. I'm still trying to work out, from a truly selfish point of view, what is the most effective way of achieving my goal - of getting more Maori in the industry. Unless The Film Commission was to say, over the next two years make two Maori films, I'm better of just going out and making



Scene from Kombi Nation



Scene from Kombi Nation

them myself. The question as to why there isn't more money available for Maori filmmaking is somewhat complex, although I think that it is a difficulty in recognizing what's good – there is a built-in excuse. There are not sufficient Maori producers, writers and directors. There is also an unusual situation that has been severely aggravated by a cycle that Maori society is in, like any society, I don't have any figures to support this – but in any society, there are x percent of artists, and y percent of lawyers, etc that make up the society. Which makes up the society. Now, in Maori society terms, over the last, 20 years, we have an unusually high proportion of our best brains going into being lawyers and accountants, which is not a bad thing, they're being driven down that direction by the treaty settlement process and the litigation and to achieve the treaty settlements, and our people's need to develop the skills to manage the

*funding establishments
to be more proactive
and more bold*

resources once the litigation is successful. So we don't have an appropriate number of our best and most creative brains going into arts. That's my gut feeling and one of the reasons why, the situation is more complex than it might first seem. I do strongly feel that there's a need for the

funding establishments to be more proactive and more bold. If they made the commitment there could be one Maori film made this year. Individuals would put scripts forward, and you may find one that's not quite there, but then you can work to get there. It's a point which I've made to Ruth (Ruth Harley, CEO, NZFC) recently and I think that she's almost bought into it. There's a fear of failure the worst failure is that you don't achieve something that you put in your statement of intent. At least if you put it in the statement of intent that we will make one Maori film, we're all going to be working towards that because it's in black and white. But having said all that, it's not that easy. I have this ultra low budget funding for eight films. I have received one script from a Maori writer. Another aspect is Maori is a European term. There was no race of Maori; they were a collection of tribes spread around the country. Which brings us to the question what is a Maori film? Is it a film directed by a Maori? **Crooked Earth**, some would say that **Crooked Earth** is a Maori film because Waihoroi Shortland is more Maori than probably anybody else working in the film drama area. He and I went to the same school together. We started on the same day and slept alongside of one another in the dormitory for five years of our lives, but he has a view that if he wrote it, it's Maori. Well, I sympathize with that view and I also think that he can say that because of whom he is. I couldn't say that because I'm not Maori enough to say that. And if I write, produce and direct something and it's a Maori subject matter, then I believe that I can say it's a Maori film. In

fact, I think I made one of the first Maori dramas, a half an hour film for television in the early '80s, which was a witty short story, which I adapted and produced and directed. It wasn't at the time perceived as being a Maori project – so getting agreement on what is a Maori film is a difficult subject. I think that **Once Were Warriors** is a Maori film because it was written and directed by a Maori even though Robin Scholes is not Maori, I still think that Maori controlled the process **Crooked Earth**, on the other hand, probably is not going to qualify as a Maori film, even though it's a Maori subject.

*see intelligent people
with strong formal
education, trained in the
craft skills of our industry*

TBOF: So, what would you like to see done, in your best case scenario to push forward the aims of Maori filmmakers in New Zealand

LP: Well, I'd like to see The Film Commission commit to make one Maori film every year – or commit funding to one Maori film every year. I think that we've got quite good penetration in Maori in the lower levels. Coming up through the ranks is not where good writers, directors and producers necessarily come from. I want to see intelligent people with strong formal education, trained in the craft skills of our industry.



Rhonda Kite

The Spirit Of Maori Essence

*Rhonda Kite is one of just a handful of Maori operating in the corporate sector, and the only Maori woman to own her own media enterprise in New Zealand. Her first foray into filmmaking was the documentary route, with a string of awards and acknowledgements behind her; Kite has embarked on her first television series, **Mataku**, that incorporates stories from *Maori Tales*. In *Conversation with The Business Of Film*, she explains her upbringing, and walking between the Maori and Pakeha worlds, which she now feels she has accomplished.*

The Business Of Film: It's unusual and refreshing to find women chief executives in our industry. From what I can gather from my short stay in New Zealand, it's highly unusual for a Maori woman. What path lead you to this point of not only owning a media enterprise, but as a recognised documentary filmmaker, and now producer of *Mataku*, a series of five half hour dramas for television based on supernatural Maori tales which are set in a contemporary setting of today?

Rhonda Kite: What got me to this point is a I had the life changing experience called 'being made redundant' at the stroke of a pen in Australia, they canned the company in New Zealand. Not an unusual story, but it was the timing for me, in my thirties I decided to take control of a number of aspects of my life. Eight-years ago in hindsight in my naiveté I jumped

I had the life changing experience called 'being made redundant' at the stroke of a pen

headfirst into the music record business. Eight-years down the line I bought my business partner out and I now own the studio. We now concentrate on scoring music for film and serial television and I've changed the business around to a sound post-production studio for Film and TV. While I was building that business, producers were coming through, I was looking at their work, and thought I've got stories that I'd like to tell, I wonder if I could. Again, chances and opportunities. Three years ago the first documentary that I made was basically about me

and my mates and how well we've done since we left school. The second documentary made was about the plight of a Maori businesswoman whose altruistic nature nearly cost her her business. I've documented her struggle, and I won my second award. The third documentary is called **The Truth About Maori**. What came out of all this was my passion to tell Maori stories. Maori stories, for me, aren't necessarily in the script. What I've discovered about myself and any work that I do, can only be told from a Maori perspective because that's who I am. I can make a program about the English, or the Chinese, but it's going to be told from a Maori perspective. That has been a big thing in New Zealand television and it's either one or the other. I have a European passport, my father was born in London and I walk in both worlds. The stories that I tell are going to be told from those two worlds and I think that in doing that, I am creating, not single-handedly, there are others out there doing the same but I am creating a new genre of television. John Barnett, who made me aware of the project, approached me, not only for my acumen in terms of a producer, but what I would bring: called the Manawahine, the spirit of Maori woman to these stories. The truth of Maoridom, is a women are the ones who hold the spirit of the race, and they're revered in that context, and ultimately hold the power.

TBOF: Explain what you mean by your Maori perspective? Not in the context of gender, but Bill Duke is an African American director that has directed a number of mainstream "white" stories. What in your case is the difference?

RK: I guess it's an esoterical thing that portrays itself in a tangible way in a story. For instance, **The Truth About Women** and **The Truth About Men** are an English format, about

high profile women and men. They confront the statistics of the genders in that highflying context. With **The Truth About Maori**, I'm telling the same story but I can't tell it like that. There's no essence to it; it's just facts. With Maori you've got to be more cunning, you don't come straight out with it, our language and who

it's an esoterical thing that portrays itself in a tangible way in a story

we (Maori) are, just doesn't work like that. I've been told that French, and Italian, is little like that too. You express want to say, in a very descriptive way. And the essence of the communication is behind that.

TBOF: When you were growing up, did your English father absorb the Maori culture?

RK: Absolutely. He taught himself Maori because my grandmother, his mother-in-law, couldn't speak English. He's a self-taught man. I can't remember as a child going to a doctor, we had a A-Z family encyclopaedia and he would take care of us, with the help of the book, so, we were brought up very much under a Maori umbrella. Unfortunately we were never taught the language. My mum came from the era where she was actually punished at school for speaking the language, that was very common in the 1920's. Back then racial prejudice was around and mum and dad went through that. My dad would go buy the food – when we needed housing, he would go for the interviews, sneaking his Maori wife and nine siblings through the back door. It was a hard

time, hard time for them. Being brought up under that umbrella with dad so respectful of the Maori ways, mum's ways; it was a natural course for me to end up doing **Mataku** our television series. **Mataku** in English means the quivering or the frightening. When I look at that, I know I can make this for a mainstream audience because I am half mainstream and I know I can make it for a Maori audience because I'm half Maori and I just need to stay within the integrity of myself.

*I have not always
felt that I qualified
as a Maori*

TBOF: How much do you feel with the way you've decided to live your life, or the way your life has been going, that it's almost a deliberate decision to bridge the two gaps in your own way. How much do you think you have to be conscious of the Maori side in order to preserve that side of you?

RK: I've found that I have to fight harder in the Maori world to get what I want than in the non-Maori world. Why? First and foremost, I'm the only Maori woman, in the audio post production area of business in the country. Secondly, I'm a Maori woman producer. Certainly all of my support and nearly without exception, at this time in my life has come from non-Maori. When it's come to the Maori world, I have had to fight, it's not quite

more on a Maori level? I dared to step out of the mould, because I am challenging to degree tribalism. Tribalism is a good thing but you can't live like that anymore. Someone has to break away from the mold, to enable not only our cultural identity to survive but our language to survive as well. One of the things that I do at the recording studio is I take programs that are originally recorded in English – animation programs and documentary -- I overdub into Maori. It took five-years to get the concept accepted here. There was a preciousness about our language, like it was sacrilege to throw it onto a cartoon character, my idea was, any language that is going to survive – has to live, and in order to live you've got to change and you've got to look at your environment and go with it. Throw the baby out with the bathwater, turn your back on the preciousness of the language. You've got to help it, you've got to feed it, you've got to love it, you've got to let it grow. And that's the stand that I take with it. And doing that I've ruffled a few feathers in Maoridom.

TBOF: Something interesting that comes out of our discussion, it would appear that all Maoris are connected in some way? I imagine it to be a small society of people when actually it's not, is it? It's 15% of the population of New Zealand So is this just a feeling of essence why you identify, why it's like that?

RK: Yes it is. It comes from our widowah, which is our spirit and comes from our Maori connection.

TBOF: So therefore it's not about 'a race', it's more about a spirit, an individual realization of that spirit. There is the

them or worship them anymore but the Atua, – the supreme being – is there. And I think that that is one thing that cannot be taken away from Maori, because it can't be taken away. Because it's just there.

*animation programs
and documentaries
I overdub into Maori*

In addition to being an independent television producer and award-winning documentary producer, Rhonda Kite is also director of Eden Tee Audio, an audio post-production facility in Auckland, that specializes in the over-dubbing of international animation programmes into Maori.

*Her recent achievements at Eden Tee Audio include a High Commendation by the Maori Women's Development as Woman of the Year 1999; winner of the NZ-TV Guide Awards Otara 1999 -- Defying the Odds for Russell McVeagh Best Maori Programme; winner TV Guide Awards 1999 for the documentary **Hell for Leather**; Commissioning from Te Mangai Paho to re-version programmes to Te Reo Maori, and as producer of **Mataku** – series of indigenous thriller dramas.*

In the past, Kite has held various honorary positions including co-chair of the NZ Academy of Film and Television Arts, Treasurer Nga Aho Whakaari Inc – representing Maori in film, television and

FOR ME, WHAT CONNECTS US ALL IS AN
INNATE BELIEF AND SENSE THAT WE ALL
STARTED IN THE SAME PLACE AND WE
WILL END UP IN THE SAME PLACE

tribalism, we are a people and we stick together and you don't go outside of the square without asking permission this is in the big picture. The other side of that is I have not always felt as that I qualified as a Maori. I've only been learning since my 30's how to walk down the middle, so it's two-fold. My insecurity in finding where I belonged, losing my mother played a big role in that, because she was the person that would represent us in Moari, we would be behind her and she would stake our claim and we knew where we stood. Take her out of the picture and we had to fight for our own place in Maoridom. Why am I challenged

physical sense of being a Maori, or a race. But actually going beyond all that you are of 'a tribe?' The tribes believe in the mountain and the sea meeting and everyone coming together.

RK: For me, what connects us all is an innate belief and sense that we all started in the same place and we will end up in the same place. That's what makes us one. No matter where you (Maori) are in the world. The English tried very hard to take us away from our gods and I think that while we've all gone off on different roads, into Christianity etc, our gods have stayed, we may not pray to

video, and Patron – imagineNATIVE2001 Canadian International Film Festival. She is currently in development for feature and television movies with Cut Water Media of Canada.

*supreme being is there.
And I think that that
is one thing that
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away from Maori*



Bad Taste - Peter Jackson's first movie

Young Blood Cult Success?

*Film directing prodigy Peter Jackson
has set out to be New Zealand's
answer to Steven Spielberg*

At 26, Peter Jackson has been a film maker for the last ten years. If that makes you double-take and worry that a new breed of movie-brat has been discovered down under, don't worry, you're right. Although the ten year old Jackson's first celluloid efforts with his parents' Super 8 camera have not been publicly screened to date, his first full length feature has many moviebrat ingredients, above all an affectionate send-up of the B-movie favourite – the sci-fi horror movie. Even the title, **Bad Taste**, reeks of a John Waters schlock sensation. "It's a science fiction black comedy," explains the young veteran, "telling the story of a bunch of aliens who come down to earth with the idea of using human beings as the exotic new taste for their fast food chain. They are always after the new flavoured burger and they reckon on 'human beings' is a great taste. So they arrive on earth and

*every Sunday using the
16mm camera and stock
Jackson bought with his
\$400 a week wage*

get to work on a little township of people on the coast of New Zealand."

Fortunately for the township, and the rest of the world, four members of a top secret government department, set up to monitor alien activity, arrive in town and manage to confront and stop these aliens in the inevitable nick of time.

Bad Taste started as an idea for a 20-minute spoof which Jackson and a few mates (all on deferred wages) would film every Sunday using the 16mm camera and stock Jackson bought with his \$400 a week wage as a photo engraver on the Evening

Post. After a year of filming, Jackson cut the footage together and discovered that he already had an hour of film and the climax hadn't been reached yet, so he decided to expand the film into a feature, and shot for another two years of Sundays.

"The film took basically four years to make. At the end of the third year showed it to the Film Commission (who had already turned the project down twice – only increasing Jackson's determination to prove them wrong) and they gave me the money to finish it off, so I was able to leave work and work on it fulltime with someone whom the Film Commission appointed as a sort of consultant. He helped me a lot, and together we got the shooting finished (still mainly at weekends because that's when the 'actors' were available) and the film into post-production.

Shot in a radius of ten miles from Jackson's home, the film's production values are high, even if the wardrobe department shows a slight under-funding. "There are only two main costumes. The aliens wear jeans and blue shirts. The good guys start out wearing civilian clothes, which was basically whatever they turned up wearing on the first day of filming. They just had to make sure that they kept those same sand shoes and the same jackets and the same jerseys on hand for the next three years.

"When the Film Commission became involved we had a little bit more money. Although it wasn't much more and most of it went on post production, in the last few months of shooting we were able to do things like blow up a car and a house. But about two thirds of the effects had already been shot before the Film Commission became involved. The special effects weren't really that expensive to shoot. I was doing my own effects and directing the film so I was able to

plan in great detail the way I'd shoot them. I knew exactly what I was going to shoot."

"I've done a lot of effects for other people's films and you can spend a lot of time wasting your time really, preparing things that are never going to be shot because the director's got something else in mind. I was able to avoid that stage."

*those same sand shoes
and the same jackets and
the same jerseys on hand
for the next three years.*

While Jackson waits for **Bad Taste** to hit Cannes and pick up a cult following along the way, his film making fingers have not been idle, "I've written a script with a couple of Wellington based writers – Steven Sinclair and Frances Walsh – called **Housebound**, which is a kind of zombie movie. I want to get that shot before the end of the year, but it will very much depend on the reaction I get to **Bad Taste**. In the meantime, Steve, Fran and I have just whipped up a script for a half hour puppet film that we're going to shoot. It's just something to fill the gap because it's about eight months since I've filmed anything, which is the biggest gap since I was ten years old and first started filming. I'm getting terribly stir crazy."

*Peter Jackson's first international
interview, reprinted from
The Business Of Film
Cannes Film Festival May 1988.*

NEW ZEALAND BIOGRAPHIES & PROFILES

CANNES 2001

CHRISTINE JEFFS DIRECTOR



Rain was produced by Christine Jeffs own production company "The Girl," that she founded in 1999 with producer Ian Gibbons. Previously, she wrote, directed and edited her first short film **Stroke**, which screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 1994 and at The Sundance Festival in 1995.

Jeffs collected Axis Direction awards for five consecutive years from 1995 and in 1999 she topped the AdMedia poll of creative directors for Best New Zealand director.

Entering the film industry doing post-production work, she became an assistant editor working on local feature films and documentaries including **Send a Gorilla**, **Ruby and Rata**, **Absent Without Leave** and **Crush**, and completed a course in editing at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School. She was also awarded Best TVC Director at the New Zealand Film and Television awards for Lipstick, a road safety commercial along with awards for her commercials for Bailey's Whiskey, the Land Transport Safety Authority, Xenical and the petrol retailer Challenge in a range of Australian and international awards.

Jeffs describes **Rain** as an emotionally provocative mother and daughter drama with relationships that investigate complex questions of power and control as Janey, the girl, and her little brother Jim, make some serious choices that have unexpected results. Jeffs wealth of directing experience was invaluable in making **Rain** as described by cinematographer on the film John Toon, who said: "I've worked alongside a lot of directors and she is one of the very few who has a total grip on what she is doing – a remarkable instinct for the performance she wants from the cast, she was constantly searching for a truthful way to portray a situation, and she gave her work as a director a real edge."

IAN GIBBONS PRODUCER

Producer Ian Gibbons set up "The Girl" Production Company in 1999 with director Christine Jeffs. Previously he was with the Australian-based Sydney Film Company Ltd., where he produced for international award winning director Brian Morrow. From 1980 to 1994, Gibbons was with Motion Pictures Ltd., a film production company servicing the New Zealand advertising industry. The company expanded to become a leading commercial boutique with national and multi-national clients whose base extended to cover UK, Europe, USA and Australia. Originally attending the University of Auckland School of Architecture, Gibbons joined Colenso Communications where he was instrumental in building the company as the highest billing agency in New Zealand where he wrote, produced and directed television commercials.

THE GIRL FILM COMPANY

Founded in 1999, The Girl Film Company Ltd., is a collaboration between director Christine Jeffs and producer Ian Gibbons, offering a service to the film, television and advertising industry. The company's objective is to produce creative, intelligent and entertaining projects, which gives an identity to the product it represents. Jeffs is one of New Zealand's most accomplished commercial directors, having won the local industry award for Direction five years consecutively. The co-founding of The Girl was her return to the industry after taking time out to write a feature film script **Rain**, from the Kristy Gunn novel of the same name that has just wrapped with Jeffs directing.

The Girl has a reputation for quality, creative work in the top end of the market and has a commitment to remain a small, focused, and personal company supporting the creative process and the filmmakers it represents. The majority of work produced by the company is for international clients and the management has experience in working in many parts of the world.

Ian Gibbons is one of the most experienced producers in New Zealand having operated his own commercial production company for 14-years before selling and taking time off for a sabbatical.

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RAIN

Director Christine Jeffs first feature film **Rain** is a story of family and a provocative coming-of-age journey for a story about a young girl as she passes, with her younger brother, from childhood to adulthood. Fully funded by The New Zealand Film Commission, **Rain** is a film about the details of everyday life – a story of change in the way relationships come and go, and to capture the moment is precious. Adapted from London-based New Zealand writer's Kristy Gunn's novel of the same name, **Rain** was filmed on locations north of Auckland, New Zealand.

As with any production involving children **Rain** is no exception and Jeffs conducted an extensive pre-production search to find the right actors to play the lead characters eventually casting newcomers Alicia Fulford-Wierzbicki as teenager Janey. Jeffs saw several hundred small boys before scouting Aaron Murphy from a school near the location to play Janey's little brother Jim.

RUTH HARLEY CHIEF EXECUTIVE NZFC



Ruth Harley, chief executive office of the New Zealand Film Commission, leads a 15-person team that handles the development, financing, production, sales & marketing and distribution of New Zealand films in the local market as well as internationally. The NZFC's role includes talent and industry development, cultural policy input, support of Maori filmmakers and servicing of the NZ Film Fund. Harley's diverse earlier career has supported her well in her present role. She has a detailed understanding of television revenue streams, advertising, production, transmission and the impact of digital and interactive media, and public broadcasting issues that include Maori. Additionally, Ruth has knowledge of product development and market segmentation within leisure and cultural industries and NZ cultural development.

NEW ZEALAND FILM COMMISSION

The New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC), reaffirms the statement it developed in 1998 by focusing on providing feature films which reach a wide audience, particularly in New Zealand, and on contributing to New Zealand's wealth of cultural capital as well as generating financial returns. This purpose recognizes that the NZFC works in partnership with a vibrant, innovative and culturally relevant film industry, and with the government, to deliver greater cultural and economic returns for New Zealand in the present and as an endowment for the future.

NZFC's direction recognizes that Maori filmmakers have an integral contribution to make to the creation of cultural capital, and it continues to develop strategies to enhance opportunities for Maori filmmakers' participation which accord with the government's goals and objectives for Maori.

The five goals reaffirmed by The NZFC in 1999 are to produce distinctively NZ films; enhance the quality of films for worldwide audiences; attract bigger local audiences; aim for higher returns on investment, and increase film production.

Some of the recent feature films NZFC has invested are **The Feathers of Peace**, **Rain**, **Snakeskin**, **The Lord of the Rings III**, **Vertical Limit**, **Kombi Nation**, **Magik + Rose**, **The Price of Milk**, **What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?**, **Scarflies**, **The Irrefutable Truth About Demons** and **Saving Grace**.

SUE THOMPSON CEO THE FILM UNIT



Sue Thompson was promoted to CEO of The Film Unit in 1999 when Peter Jackson purchased the company from TV-New Zealand. Previously she had set the company up as a separate business unit and progressed to make The Film Unit become the first laboratory to receive total quality management accreditation from Kodak called imagecare.

As part of the company's progress, she oversaw substantial upgrading of the facilities including

the installment of an in-house digital telecine, and extensive upgrading of the sound mixing units.

Thompson started in the film industry over 20-years ago as promotions and management at several theatre companies in Australia and New Zealand, before embarking on a career as film buyer which afforded her valuable experience including international sales, film financing and production. She worked with Peter Jackson on such many of his films including **Braindead**, **Desperate Remedies** and **Heavenly Creatures**. She was deputy chair of the NZ Film Commission for two years, and is currently on the Board of Trustees of the NZ Film & TV School.

THE FILM UNIT

Conveniently located in Wellington, central New Zealand, The Film Unit is Australasia's most comprehensive film post production facility, equipped and positioned to service every aspect of processing and post production for film. It offers a fast, reliable courier service from anywhere in the country enabling daily rushes to be quickly delivered to the Unit for processing. The company services production shoots all over New Zealand as well as North America, Asia, The Pacific Rim and the Arctic Circle. Recent feature films that have used The Film Unit's facilities include **Vertical Limit**, **Cast Away**, **Heavenly Creatures**, **The Price of Milk**, **Kids World**, **Stickmen** and **The Lord of the Rings** trilogy.

The Film Unit houses digital scanning, on-site lab for negative processing, Kodak's imagecare, high-performance digital sound and a 180-seater screening room.

BILL GAVIN PRODUCER



Based at South Pacific Pictures where he will executive co-produce **The Whale Rider**, which is currently in development, Gavin first entered the film industry in 1974 when he established UK's GTO Films, acquiring rights to such films as Peter Weir's **Picnic at Hanging Rock** and Lina Wertmuller's **Swept Away**. Four years later joined 20th Century Fox and set up Hoyts Distribution in Australia eventually

spearheading their entry into production. Following a time at Lord Grade's ITC Films in London, he joined Goldcrest Film and Television as director of marketing and distribution pre-selling such films as **The Killing Fields**, **Local Hero**, **Cal**, **Another Country** and **The Emerald Forest**.

In 1984 he started Gavin Films Ltd., a sales company specializing in financing and marketing independent films. He returned to New Zealand in 1991 where he developed, produced and arranged financing for feature film projects such as Dennis Hopper's **The Hot Spot**, **The Last Tattoo**, **What Becomes of the Brokenhearted?** and **Jubilee**.

GAYLENE PRESTON DIRECTOR



Director Gaylene Preston and producer partner Robin Laing formed Preston*Laing Productions in 1984 to make the feature film **Mr Wrong** (U.S. title **Dark of the Night**), which was a global hit selling to more than 90 international territories following its local theatrical release in New Zealand. It has since been re-licensed in many territories.

A mid-year 2001 shoot is planned for the company's newest project **Perfect Strangers**, that Preston will direct and co-produce with Laing. Preston had previously made several features and television mini-series including **Ruby & Rata**, **Bread and Roses**, **Punitive Damage**, **Getting To Our Place**, and **War Stories Our Mothers Never Told Us**, which she produced and directed for theatrical release to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. **War Stories** was selected for screening by the American Film Institute and in official Selection at the 1995 Venice Film Festival.

Equally at home making features, documentaries and commercials, she has won many local and international awards, the most recent being a Silver Clio at Cannes. Her films have been screened at film festivals including Venice, Sundance, Toronto, London, Sydney and Melbourne.

ROBIN LAING PRODUCER



Robin Laing's next project with producing partner Gaylene Preston is **Perfect Strangers** to begin filming mid-year 2001. Since 1982 Laing has worked in various capacities in the New Zealand film industry as wardrobe supervisor, props buyer and production manager before forming the partnership of Preston*Laing Productions in 1984. Preston*Laing's initial production **Mr Wrong** was an international hit following its local release success in New Zealand and has since been re-licensed in many territories.

In addition to producing television dramas and documentaries **The Imploding Self** and **Stroke**, Laing's producing credits include **Ruby & Rata**, **Bread and Roses** and **War Stories**.

In 1993, she was awarded an MBE for services to the NA film industry. Laing is Chair of the Trust Board of the New Zealand Film and Television School.

DAVID GASCOIGNE CHAIRMAN THE FILM FUND



David Gascoigne heads the five trustees appointed to manage the publicly funded New Zealand Film Production Fund Trust established in 2000. A founding board member and ex-chair of the NZ Film Commission, Originally a corporate lawyer, he is also a company director and arts administrator and

some of his present New Zealand clients include Shell, The National Bank, General Motors, On Air and the Lotteries Commission. A partner and subsequently national chairman of partners to a law firm with offices in Auckland and Wellington, Gascoigne is a founding trustee of the New Zealand Film and Television School. In addition, Gascoigne is currently a board member of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and deputy chairman of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council.

The aim of The Film Fund is to support the development and growth of the sustainable New Zealand film industry, assisting the talent base development of experienced filmmakers by enabling them to obtain international exposure and experience, helping to build a more successful industry.

NEW ZEALAND FILM FUND

The Film Fund, created to support films to be produced on a larger scale than those generally afforded by the NZFC, will support the production of up to ten feature films over the next eight years. It also supports the growth of a talent base, creating jobs for many New Zealander's who might work off shore.

The new Film Fund enables experienced New Zealand filmmakers to make more complex and textured films. It opens up creative opportunities by providing a bridge for filmmakers between low budget films that the NZFC traditionally backed, to more substantial productions. Jane Campion's **An Angel at my Table**, Peter Jackson's **Heavenly Creatures**, and Scott Reynold's **The Ugly** are features supported by the Commission which resulted in offshore finance being offered to these talented filmmakers.

The NZ government contributed \$NZ22-million to the establishment of the feature film production fund as an independent charitable trust administered by the Fund board members who have a mix of NZ film industry business and commercial experience. Headed by Chairman David Gascoigne, the four member team is Chris Prowse, a former finance director of the NZFC; Wendy Palmer, chief executive of MGM's London-based United Artists Films; Alan Sorrell, chairman of the NZFC, and Ruth Harley, chief executive of the Film Commission.

Whereas, the NZFC provides up to \$NZ8-million annually towards the development and production of feature films, to support up to four films per year, it has capped its total investment in any one film at \$NZ1.8-million. It has been able to support more than four features films a year because a portion of the budgets has been low. Such budgets are invaluable for first time directors and for projects with modest financial schedules.

DON SELWYN EXECUTIVE PRODUCER/DIRECTOR THE MERCHANT OF VENICE



Don Selwyn was inspired to make a Maori version of Shakespeare's **The Merchant of Venice** (**Te Tangata Whai Rawa O Wentiti**), as a feature film after directing a stage production in the Koanga Festival in Auckland. The imaginative version combines his passion for Shakespeare with his lifelong commitment to the revitalization of the Maori native language. His longstanding career encompasses actor, producer and director in New Zealand's film and television industry, Selwyn is champion of Maori drama, performed in both Maori and English, and a prime mover in encouraging respect for Maori viewpoints and culture in the country's entertainment industry.

He began in the entertainment industry acting in a stage production of Shakespeare's **Midsummer Nights Dream** followed by the musical **Porgy & Bess**, the film **Sleeping Dogs** and television's **Mortimer's Patch**, **Marlin Bay**, **The Governor**, and **Pukemanu**.

Always concerned with education and promotion of Maori, he formed He Taonga Films to create job opportunities for course graduates, and produced Maori language television dramas **Maui Pootiki** and **Tohunga**, and the NZ Media Peace award-winning feature **The Feathers of Peace**.

He has secured roles for Maori actors in such feature films as **Once Were Warriors**, **What Becomes of the Brokenhearted?** **Broken English**, **Jubilee** and **Crooked Earth**.

HE TAONGA FILMS

He Taonga Films arose out of a film and television-training school called Te Taonga I Tawhiti that Don Selwyn operated for six-years until 1990. Established under the then Department of Maori Affairs Tu Tangata programme, the aim was to give Maori and Pacific people the technical skills to enable them to tell their own stories and many of the 120 students who attended the course are successfully established in the entertainment

industry today. In 1993 Selwyn and producer Ruth Kaupua Panapa formed He Taonga Films to create jobs for course graduates and to provide options for Maori writers.

He Taonga produces drama for film and television in Maori, English and bi-lingual. The company selects its production crews on a racially inclusive basis, depending on skill, personality and the individual's ability to work to the kaupapa or philosophy of the production. The crew of Shakespeare's **The Merchant of Venice**, Moari title **Te Tangata Whai Rawa O Weniti**, included Maori, Pacific Islanders, Pakeha, Croatian, Sri Lankan, Australian, English and Scottish personnel.

Previously, He Taonga Films produced in Maori-language such films as **Maui Pootiki**, **Turia**, **Tohunga** and **Te Ohake a Nihe**, and in English and bi-lingual: **Don't Go Past With Your Nose in the Air**, **Small Town Blues**, **Visitation**, **Koro's Hat**, **A Day in the Life**, **Talk of the Town** and **Feathers of Peace**.

KATHLEEN DRUMM



Promoted to the new role as Head of Feature Film International Sales & Marketing at The New Zealand Film Commission, Kathleen Drumm is responsible for the organization of the annual participation at film markets such as AFM, Cannes and MIFED. She also handles the coordination of NZ films at international film festivals and facilitates international events with a New Zealand focus. Kathleen has worked in sales and marketing for the past six years alongside Lindsay Shelton providing production finance and promotional support for the country's film projects and filmmakers. Over the past few years, her main focus was the marketing of short films funded by the Film Commission where she trebled the annual sales income within two years.

Prior to joining the Film Commission, Drumm worked in sales and marketing publishing at Hodder & Stoughton and Random House.

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GILLIAN ASHURST WRITER/DIRECTOR



Gillian Ashurst has a big vision, she likes to play on the edge of reality. Her zany lifestyle is evidenced in her first feature film script and directing debut of **Snakeskin**. With a varied multimedia background including creative writing, journalism, artwork, design and digital editing, Ashurst took a career turn in 1996 attending the New Zealand Film and Television Training School where she made **Confessions of a Latter Day Slut**, that she wrote, produced, directed and edited. Upon graduating she gained funding for **Venus Blue**, a short film that was officially selected for the 1999 Sundance Film Festival.

In addition to **Snakeskin**, she has two more feature scripts currently in development with business partner Vanessa Sheldrick.

VANESSA SHELDRICK PRODUCER



Graduating from The New Zealand Film and Television Training School in 1996, Vanessa Sheldrick worked as an assistant director on the television series **Xena** and the telefilm **Amazon High**. She became involved in Gillian Ashurst's film project **Venus Blue**, as producer responsible for fund raising and sponsorship deals. Sheldrick produced **Snakeskin** as part of the on-going association with director Ashurst. Previously, she attended Canterbury University where she majored in art history, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts Degree. She traveled abroad gaining valuable experience and skills that later were useful to her filmmaking career.

CHRIS BROWN EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Film and television industry executive veteran, Chris Brown has produced 17 feature films as well as numerous TV shows. Recent project is **Snakeskin** to be followed by horror picture **The Third Circle**, now in pre-production.

Managing Director of Palace Productions during 80's where he produced **The Company of Wolves** and **Mona Lisa** which won two Golden Globes and an Oscar for Best Actor, Bob Hoskins. He also produced **Absolute Beginners** starring David Bowie, **Siesta** with Ellen Barkin. In the past decade Brown executive produced **Dancing through the Dark**, **Crimebroker**, **Seventh Floor**, **Blackwater Trial** and **White Lies**.

Brown set up a low budget scheme for new talent in New Zealand in 1966, that produced **Via Satellite**, **Savage Honeymoon**, **Scarflies**, and **Stickmen**. In 1998, he co-produced a \$22.5-m special effects film **Komodo**.

LISA CHATFIELD PRODUCER

New Zealand's youngest feature film producer, Lisa Chatfield earned a Diploma at Christchurch Polytechnic in 1991 where she was production assistant on **Tiki Tiki Forest Gang**, directed by Robert Sarkies. A strong working relationship developed with Sarkies and Chatfield went on to co-produce his short film **Dream Makers**, followed by **Signing Off**. Chatfield achieved numerous credits as production manager, both with Communicado in New Zealand and the BBC Natural History Unit in the UK. She also produced various commercials for clients such as Saatchi & Saatchi, Colenso, Young & Rubicam and Mojo.

ROBERT SARKIES DIRECTOR

The story for the feature film **Scarflies** evolved out of a solid working relationship between Robert Sarkies, producer Lisa Chatfield, with input from director of photography Stephen Downes and Sarkies' brother Duncan. **Scarflies** is writer/director Sarkies feature film debut following on from three short films **Dream Makers**, that won First Prize at the Semana de Cine Experimental Festival in Madrid, **Flames from the Heart** and **Signing Off**, recipient of six international awards including First Prize at the Montreal International Film Festival. **Signing Off** also became the New Zealand Film Commission's highest-selling short film of 1997.

Sarkies began his film career out of a combined love for drama, technology and pyrotechnics conceived when he was 10-years old making his first amateur film **Snap, Sizzle and Bang** and wanting to blow up a building as the story revolved around

the building's destruction. His passion for filmmaking was so great that throughout his school days he didn't eat preferring to save his lunch money for films.

Sarkies time as a scarfie (a young student) at Dunedin's the University of Otago studying drama and history gave him the inspiration for the feature film **Scarfies** which materialized after he finished his degree and spent time making local commercials.

By this time he had formed a working relationship with producer Chatfield and they formed Nightmare Productions which originally produced Sarkies' short films. Quotes Sarkies: "We didn't like to get caught up in the seriousness of filmmaking, we wanted to enjoy it and have fun."

This philosophy is prevalent in **Scarfies**, although Sarkies had some firm ideas about his first feature. "Dunedin had many memories for me when I was a scarfie years ago and wanted to capture that feeling of growing up in a place far removed from parents and responsibility."

**SCOTT REYNOLDS
DIRECTOR**



Writer/director Scott Reynolds feature **When Strangers Appear**, completed in collaboration with producer Sue Rogers, marks the second time the team have worked together following **Heaven** which screened at the 1998 Toronto Film Festival and later received Best International Film at the 1999 Montreal Fantasia Film Festival.

Reynolds debut film **The Ugly** was released in 1997 and gained selection in various categories at international festivals including Brussels, Toronto, London, Sitges where he received Best Director Award, and the Rome Fantafestival where the film won awards for Best Screenplay and Best Actor Paolo Rotondo.

With both parents working in the film industry, Reynolds literally grew up by way of film and originally graduated as a projectionist where the hundreds of films he watched were his unofficial film school training.

**SUE ROGERS
PRODUCER**

The recently completed feature **When Strangers Appear** marks the second collaboration between producer Sue Rogers and writer/director Scott Reynolds. It has been picked up for international distribution by Columbia TriStar, with Germany and German speaking territories handled by Senator Films. Their first collaboration was **Heaven**, which Rogers developed and produced negotiating 100% financing from Miramax.

Over the past decade she has worked in several production capacities that gave her valuable experience for her chosen film industry career ranging from producer to art department head to miscellaneous crew on various films. Starting as graphics designer on **Meet the Feebles**, **Just the Feebles** in the U.S., **Bread & Roses**, **Heavenly Creatures**, **Forgotten Silver** and **Braindead**, she progressed to unit publicist on Robert Zemeckis' **The Frighteners**.

**JOHN BARNETT
MANAGING DIRECTOR**



Managing Director of South Pacific Pictures, John Barnett is currently executive producer of the company's **The Whale Rider**. He began his film and television career as an independent filmmaker producing some of New Zealand's first television drama series, before joining South Pacific Pictures as in 1993. Previously he produced television documentaries and more than 12 feature films including **Middle Age Spread**, **Beyond Reasonable Doubt**, **Race for the Yankee Zephyr**, and the animated **Footrot Flats**. Barnett has been actively involved in New Zealand's film, television and video distribution and the development of multiplex cinemas as well as film industry politics throughout his career.

Since joining South Pacific Pictures he has developed a number of European co-production projects and steered the company's move into longer run television series.

He is a member of the Board of the New Zealand Film Commission, the Screen Producers and Directors Association, and the Film & Video Labeling Body.

SOUTH PACIFIC PICTURES

One of the most prolific producers of drama in New Zealand, South Pacific Pictures founded 10-years ago, has to its credit more than 1300 hours of drama for television and film. In addition to its vast library of diverse television shows, the company also produces one of the longest running television drama series in the country's history **Shortland Street**.

In 1998, South Pacific Pictures migrated into feature film producing with such titles as **What Becomes of the Brokenhearted?** sequel to **Once Were Warriors**, and **Jubilee** for local release and international distribution. Their future production slate includes **The Whale Rider**, currently in pre-production.

The company is owned by a consortium made up of Endeavour Entertainment, John Barnett's company, Force Corporation, a New Zealand entertainment group, and Chrysalis Visual Entertainment.

South Pacific Pictures owns the first purpose built film and television studio facility in Auckland.

**MICHELLE TURNER
PRODUCER**



Stickmen marks Michelle Turner's first feature film credit as producer. Her two previous short films **Paris**, **Brixton**, which she produced, and **The Unicyclist**, which she co-produced, screened in the New York and Aspen Short Film Festivals as well the British Short Film Festival, Valencia, Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch film festivals. It also sold to the Sundance cable channel and Virgin Atlantic Airlines.

Turner began her industry career as assistant to Robin Laing, and later worked as sales & marketing assistant at Cannes for the NZFC. She has various capacities as line producer on **Valley of the Stereos**, and location manager for the television series' **Twist in the Tale**, **Cover Story**, **Mirror Mirror I & II**.

Recently she was production coordinator for the Fiji unit of **Cast Away** with Tom Hanks.

NICK WARD WRITER



Although **Stickmen** is Nick Ward's first screenplay to evolve into a feature film, he has a stack of scripts in his attic that nobody has ever seen. Previously a writer at Saatchi & Saatchi in Wellington, he turned to freelance writing after meeting producer Michelle Turner and director Hamish Rothwell and Stick Films Ltd., was born. The idea for the film came to him when he shared an apartment with six buddies and each night they went out and played pool.

Ward started work at an assortment of jobs in the New Zealand advertising industry before joining the DMB&B Group where he wrote copy for clients such as Coca-Cola, Lloyds Bank, British Airways, Pepsi, Ford and Guinness. But the love of writing moved him towards film scripts and **Stickmen** evolved.

STICKMEN FILMS LTD

Stick Films Ltd., was founded August 1999 for the production of **Stickmen**, produced in association with the NZFC, NZ On Air, TV-NZ and Portman Entertainment which handles worldwide sales excluding New Zealand and Australia. The company is owned and operated by Michelle Turner, producer; Hamish Rothwell, director, and Nick Ward, screenwriter, and making up the Stick Films team are Neville Stevenson, production designer, and Nigel Bluck, director of photography.

Internationally, the feature **Stickmen** has been sold to Australia, the UK, Germany, France, Scandinavia, Denmark, Benelux, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, South Africa, Japan, Korea, Philippines, Israel, Russia, Czech Republic and will open domestically in New Zealand. Stick Films has **Scam**, a future project in development.

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YVONNE MACKAY DIRECTOR

Award-winning film and television director Yvonne Mackay began directing television drama in 1974 following a stint in radio. She emerged as one of New Zealand's most prolific directors, creating more than 100-hours of programming for TV-NZ. Mackay became a partner of The Gibson Group in 1979 directing a variety of television programming including several award-winning children's television drama specials, the award-winning **The Silent One**, the primetime mini-series **Typhon's People**, **Bungay on Crime**, **Undercover**, **Close to Home**, **Safer Sex**, **Public Eye**, **The Ballet of Jean Batten**, various episodes of the longform **Duggan**, and most recently the telefeature **Clare**.

Mackay is actively involved in the development of a number of feature scripts that she will direct for release through First Sun, The Gibson Group's associated division dedicated solely to feature film production, that include **Mandarin Summer** and **One Moment (AKA Castle Of Lies)**, to be directed by Mackay. Other scripts are **This Virtual Life**, **Second Hand Rose**, **One for the Road** and **Leo and Me**.

VANESSA ALEXANDER WRITER/DIRECTOR



Alexander was producer on the first television series of **Being Eve**. She has an MA in Film and Television, a BA in Drama/English, and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Film Directing from the Victoria College of Art, Melbourne. She has written several plays staged in New Zealand, one of which won the International Student Playwriting Award 1991. Her short film **My Mother Practices Drowning** screened at a number of international film festivals including Sydney, Seattle and Mill Valley, and won a Cinevex Script Prize in Melbourne. Alexander was recently named SPADA Young Filmmaker of the year 2000.

Originally Alexander's only concern with the aspects of filmmaking was the intellectual and experimental aspects. She wanted to write a screenplay that was very honest, that to her was

a blend of comedy and chaos so that all the characters in the film were different, dressing differently and having different lifestyles with a link that is inherently human about the desire that connects them. The result was **Magik + Rose**, Alexander's first feature as writer/director.

Her debut film is about similarity and difference and says Vanessa: "It's about the odd way that humans, all humans, have a point of connection. The fact that you can't predict anything. That's what makes life real, and quite funny at times."

Magik + Rose is about two women, fortune telling, sex in the workplace, line dancing, 23 ripe sperm donors and a long-lost daughter.

LINDSAY SHELTON CONSULTANT NZFC



Lindsay Shelton retires this Cannes Film Festival as marketing director of the New Zealand Film Commission where he has worked since 1979 handling international sales and marketing of more than 80 NZ feature films, starting with **Goodbye Pork Pie** which he sold to over 50 countries. He remains at the NZFC as a consultant. Other titles that he sold were **An Angel At My Table** and **Once Were Warriors**, for release in more than 60 international territories.

Shelton introduced New Zealand's film industry to the world by organizing participation at Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Toronto and New York film festivals as well as the international markets of AFM and MIFED.

He is founder of the Wellington Film Festival and also acts as chairman of the NZ Federation of Film Societies and as president of the Wellington Film Society with a membership of more than 2700.

In the New Zealand 2000 Honors he became a Member of the Order of Merit for his services to film.

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DAVE GIBSON THE GIBSON GROUP

Dave Gibson's entertainment career began in 1974 when he started producing and directing television educational programmes. The '80s saw him move into drama and comedy with projects such as **The Haunting of Barney Miller**, the telefeature **Undercover**, and the feature film **The Silent One**. In the '90s, Gibson joined The Gibson Group, one of New Zealand's independent film and television companies, where he produced the primetime drama mini-series **Typhon's People**, co-produced two series of international children's drama **Mirror, Mirror** and four series of the New Zealand comedy show **Skitz**.

More recently he has produced the long-running **Duggan** telefeatures and **Tiger Country** for TV3. In 1998, First Sun, a division of The Gibson Group, was established to concentrate solely on feature film production in association with partner/director Yvonne Mackay. First Sun's debut feature **The Irrefutable Truth About Demons**, produced by Dave Gibson, premiered at the Cannes Film Festival 2000.

Gibson serves on the board of the New Zealand Drama School, was inaugural chair of the NZ Independent Producers Guild and chaired the first NZ Film and Television Conference in 1992.

THE GIBSON GROUP

The Gibson Group, one of New Zealand's multi-media corporations, has been producing television projects since 1978 spanning a range of genres including primetime drama, children's drama, comedy, documentary, arts magazine and information programmes. Since 1994, the company has worked with international co-production partners from Australia, Canada, Britain and Sweden. Its programmes have won numerous awards, both in New Zealand and worldwide. Currently producing between 80 to 100 hours of television each year, The Gibson Group has earned a reputation for professionalism and creative excellence. In 1998, the company established First Sun, a division of The Gibson Group, to solely concentrate on feature film production in association with director Yvonne Mackay. Its partners are producer/managing director Dave Gibson, director/company director Yvonne Mackay, and development executive Alan Bash. Since its founding, First Sun has produced **The Irrefutable Truth About Demons**, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival 2000 and is currently in international release as well as U.S. domestic release. Mackay is actively involved in a number of feature film scripts to be released through **First Sun**, including **Mandarin Summer**, **One Moment (AKA Castle Of Lies)**, **This Virtual Life**, **Second Hand Rose**, **One for the Road**, and **Leo and Me**.

LARRY PARR MANAGING DIRECTOR KAHUKURA PRODUCTIONS



Following graduation with a Law Degree in 1975, Larry Parr joined Broadbank Corporation Ltd., where he arranged financing for Roger Donaldson's film **Sleeping Dogs**. Bitten by the filmmaking bug, Parr left the bank to pursue his career in film production. Initially he worked with Donaldson at Aardvark Films making television commercials, before embarking solo as associate producer on **Merry Xmas Mr. Lawrence** starring David Bowie. He went on to produce such diverse feature films as **Constance**, **A Soldier's Tale**, that Parr directed, **Bridge to Nowhere**, **Magik + Rose**, **Kombi Nation**, and **Lovebites**.

While Kahukura Productions was founded in 1990, its first major project was **Saving Grace** produced in 1996. All of Parr's projects since then have been produced through Kahukura.

KAHUKURA PRODUCTIONS

Kahukura Productions headed by independent filmmaker Larry Parr, produces quality New Zealand dramas for a New Zealand audience that also have appeal internationally. Founded in 1990 with a first project **Saving Grace**, all of Parr's projects since then have been produced through Kahukura. The company's diverse range of feature films produced by Larry includes **Papakaigna**, **Original Skin**, **Lovebites** and **Aidiko Insane**. He directed **The Makutu on Mrs Jones**, **A Soldiers Tale**, **Nga Uri Whatatipu** and **Sun and Shadow**. Recently completed projects include **Magik + Rose**, **Hopeless** and **Fish Skin Suit**. In post-production is **Kombi Nation**, a first New Zealand feature film funded by the Film Commission and filmed predominately outside of New Zealand.

In development through Kahukura are **Crime Story**, **Dissolving Dream**, **Baxter** and **A Life in Romance**.

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RHONDA KITE DIRECTOR/PRODUCER KIWA FILMS



In addition to being an independent television producer and award-winning documentary producer, Rhonda Kite is also director of Eden Tee Audio, an audio post-production facility in Auckland, that specializes in the over-dubbing of international animation programmes into Maori. Her recent achievements at Eden Tee Audio include a High Commendation by the Maori Women's Development as Woman of the Year 1999; winner of the NZ-TV Guide Awards Otago 1999 -- **Defying the Odds for Russell McVeagh** Best Maori Programme; winner TV Guide Awards 1999 for the documentary **Hell for Leather**; Commissioning from **Te Mangai Paho** to re-version programmes to **Te Reo Maori**, and as producer of **Mataku** – series of indigenous thriller dramas.

In the past, Kite has held various honorary positions including co-chair of the NZ Academy of Film and Television Arts, Treasurer Nga Aho Whakaari Inc – representing Maori in film, television and video, and Patron – imagineNATIVE2001 Canadian International Film Festival.

She is currently in development for feature and television movies with Cut Water Media of Canada.

KIWA FILMS

Kiwa Films Eden Tee Audio Ltd., operated by Rhonda Kite, managing director, is Auckland's largest audio facility offering audio post-production suites. Over the years its facilities have played host to many of New Zealand's successful music artists, feature films, television series and commercials. The studio specializes in reversioned foreign language translation and overdubbing for many diverse projects that have included the animated productions of **Casper the Friendly Ghost** and **The Wind in the Willows**, feature films such as **Snakeskin**, **The Irrefutable Truth About Demons**, **What Becomes of the Brokenhearted? Magik & Rose**, **Jubilee**, **The Frighteners**, **The Piano**, and television series such as **Xena, Warrior Princess**, and the **Black Beauty** series.

DALE BRADLEY DIRECTOR

Dale Bradley's fifth film **Kids World** starring Christopher Lloyd will be released nationally in the US with the largest ever opening of a film directed by an independent New Zealand filmmaker. His other recent credits include **Lost Valley** and **Wild Blue** and **Chunuk Bair**, starring Robert Powell and Kevin J. Wilson, a finalist for ten New Zealand Film & Television Awards including Best Film, Best Director and Best Actor.

Previously he directed the documentary **Nikki, A Young Champion**, shot on location in Moscow; produced the two hour special **Kia Ora Bonjour - Howard Morrison Inside France**; served as second unit director and co-producer of **Chill Factor**, a feature film starring Patrick MacNee; and produced/directed numerous television specials for TVNZ.

When not writing or directing for Daybreak Pacific Films, the production company he operates with his brother, Bradley officiates as the company's head of production.

GRANT BRADLEY PRODUCER

Grant Bradley is one of New Zealand's most prolific producers, having produced over five films in the last four years including **Repeat Performance**, **Lost Valley**, **Wild Blue** and **Kids World** starring Christopher Lloyd which will be released nationwide in the US. He also produced **Ozzie** starring Joan Collins, Spencer Breslin, Rachel Hunter, and a talking Koala.

Under his company's Daybreak Pacific Limited brand name Film Nights, Bradley produced three thrillers: **Exposure**, **No One Can Hear You** and **The Vector File** as well as serving as executive producer and producer on the feature film **Chunuk Bair** starring Robert Powell and Kevin J. Wilson, that was a finalist for ten New Zealand Film & Television Awards including Best Film, Best Director and Best Actor.

Bradley also executive produced **Chill Factor** starring Patrick MacNee; **God's Outlaw** a co-production for Channel 4 in the UK; the documentary **Nikki, A Young Champion** shot on location in Moscow; along with numerous television specials for the Discovery Channel. Bradley spends much of his time in Europe and the US developing relationships with film financiers and buyers.

DAYBREAK PACIFIC LIMITED

Brother's Dale and Grant Bradley established Daybreak Pacific Ltd. headquartered in Auckland, in 1989 with a vision to export New Zealand-made entertainment worldwide. During the past four years the production company rapidly accelerated increasing its earnings from NZ\$1-million to NZ\$20-million

and brought some of Hollywood's profile stars to appear in its films.

During their combined 20 years in the industry, the Bradley's have produced with a strong commercial focus and a clear vision for the international marketplace and are the country's most active filmmakers.

Their combined talent covers financing, producing, writing and directing, creating quality drama for both theatrical and television markets.

Under the film brand Daybreak Pacific, the company produces high quality films suitable for a wide audience, with titles produced to date including: **Ozzie** starring Joan Collins, Spencer Breslin, Rachel Hunter; written by Lori O'Brien and Michael Lach, directed by Bill Tannen; **Kids World** starring Christopher Lloyd, Blake Foster; produced by Grant Bradley, written by Michael Lach and directed by Dale Bradley; **Wild Blue** with Judge Reinhold, Nicola Murphy; produced by Grant Bradley, written and directed by Dale Bradley; **Lost Valley** with Meg Foster, Andrea Thompson; produced by Grant Bradley, written and directed by Dale Bradley, and **Chunuk Bair** starring Robert Powell, Kevin J Wilson; produced by Grant Bradley, written and directed by Dale Bradley.

Under the film brand Film Knights, the company produces drama with a harder edge for a mature audience, with titles produced to date:

The Vector File starring Casper Van Dien, Catherine Oxenberg; produced by Grant Bradley and Richard Stewart, directed by Christopher Graves; **No One Can Hear You** with Kelly McGillis, Barry Corbin; produced by Grant Bradley and Richard Stewart, directed by John Laing, and **Exposure** starring Ron Silver, Alexandra Paul; produced by Grant Bradley and Richard Stewart, directed by David Blythe.

Feature films and television series produced by the brothers have sold well to international markets, with several titles featuring in the list of all time best-selling New Zealand made productions.

HARRY SINCLAIR DIRECTOR/WRITER THE PRICE OF MILK



Following an early acting start, Harry Sinclair turned his attention to behind-the-camera activities directing three feature films, **The Price of Milk**; that opened earlier this year on wave US release and is now in international release; **Topless Women Talk About Their Lives**, and the upcoming **Film 3**, in post-production. Previously he directed several short films including **Walkshort**, **Casual Sex**, **Avenue Du Maine**, **Linda's Body**, awarded Best Short Film at the 1990 New Zealand Film Awards, and **Lounge Bar**, finalist in the 1989 American Film and Video Festival, International Shorts.

His diverse career includes a series of live shows appearing in the productions of **The Story of Robert**, **The Washing Machine**, **The Reason for Breakfast** and **Songs and Stories from The Front Lawn** which was so successful that a series of song albums and sequel shows emerged from the original production.

Born in Auckland, where he continues to live, Sinclair studied drama at the Ecole Philippe Gaulier in Paris. The acting bug recently drew him back to play King Isildur in the **The Lord of the Rings** trilogy shooting in New Zealand.

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FIONA COPLAND
PRODUCER



Fiona Copland's career encompasses that of producer, executive producer and director of a number of feature films as well as lifestyle and arts television programming for TV-New Zealand. Recent feature films that she produced with director/writer and business partner Harry Sinclair include **The Price of Milk**, that opened earlier this year on US wave release and is also in international release, **Topless Women Talk About Their Lives**, which won several awards including Best Film, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Editing and Best Supporting Actress at the New Zealand Film Awards 1997, and upcoming **Film 3**, currently in post-production.

Her most noted television dramas are **Love Bites** for TV-NZ3, **Staunch**, **Fish Skin Suit**, **Money for Jam**, **The Possum Hunter**, **Move Mussel** and **Sweet Nothings**. For her work on the documentaries **New Zealand Wars**, **Blood and Hair**, Copland won Best Documentary at the NZ Film & Television Awards 1997, and a Gold Award in Arts Documentary at the New York Festival 1994.

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