

INTRODUCTION

Wolf Creek is based on true events set in the desolate Australian Outback.

30,000 people are reported missing in Australia each year.

90% are found within a month.

Some are never seen again.

It was supposed to be the vacation of a lifetime in the Australian Outback – full of fun, sun and adventure. But what happened to a trio of twenty-something backpackers took a wrenching detour into the depths of unrelenting terror. Based on true events, WOLF CREEK is the haunting story of their unthinkable ordeal – a mounting white-knuckle nightmare so real it was destined to become horror legend. WOLF CREEK is a startlingly intense motion picture experience of rapidly escalating dread and suspense. At the 2005 Sundance Film Festival, the film – written and directed by Melbourne's Greg McLean – was acclaimed as a daring, original blend of visually hypnotic thriller with unbearably scary movie. The chillingly believable events begin as freewheeling, college-aged pals Liz (Cassandra Magrath), Kristy (Kestie Morassi) and Ben (Nathan Phillips) head out for a holiday hike in stunning Wolf Creek National Park to see its mysterious meteor crater. When they return, their car won't start. Trapped in the vast emptiness of the wilderness – all they can do is wait for rescue. Luckily, as night falls, along comes colorful local bushman Mick (John Jarratt) and his massive truck, offering a tow to safety. But as the sun comes up the next morning, it becomes shockingly apparent that Mick has no intention of fixing their car or letting them leave the Outback...ever again. As Liz, Kristy and Ben search for any conceivable way out, WOLF CREEK plunges towards an unforgettable climax.

SYNOPSIS

***“I’m going to do something now they used to do in Vietnam...
It’s called making a head on a stick.”***

Liz Hunter (CASSANDRA MAGRATH) and Kristy Earl (KESTIE MORASSI) are twenty-something British backpackers in Broome, Western Australia, on a road trip with their Australian friend, Ben Mitchell (NATHAN PHILLIPS). For them it’s a time to cut loose, reconnect, and rediscover life, friendship, perhaps newfound love, and the countryside’s astonishing visual beauty.

Their journey begins full of energy, jokes, and a little urban myth-swapping about UFO sightings. These playful tales told one evening at a camping spot by Ben rightly spook Liz and Kristy, however, the worry they experience pales in comparison to the impending terror which shreds their definition of fear shortly after reaching the ‘Wolf Creek’ National Park, a meteor impact site which is the attraction of many road-tripping tourists.

The trio spends a day at the site, its massive size a picture perfect setting for silence and rumination – a calm before the storm; the handsome Ben even finds it an opportune time to make his move on Liz, who is more than receptive to his kiss. Ready to leave at dusk, they find their watches stopped, a peculiarity compounded by the fact that their car is not working either. As they relinquish themselves to spending the night within the vehicle’s cramped confines, Liz spots some lights traveling toward them. The intimidating growl of an approaching truck dismisses the thought of a UFO encounter. Enter Mick Taylor (JOHN JARRATT), an affable brute of a man equipped with a warm grin, infectious laugh, and the means to tow the broken down vehicle back to his camp where he promises to get it up and running.

Back at his compound, Mick paints a bloody, vague portrait of his life as Liz, Kristy, and Ben settle in around a fire. Once a former vermin shooter, his position was considered archaic by his superiors. Their reason being the mounting use of poisons replacing the effectiveness of a well-placed bullet. Now he lives in solitude surrounded by the husks of corroding vehicles and mining equipment. With the hour growing late, Mick continues

his work on the car as Liz, Kristy, and Ben doze off, unaware that the morning will give rise to a feral struggle for survival...

And the charming Mick Taylor persona they placed their confidence in is merely an unassuming shell for an unrelenting killer within.

Australia's remorseless story drawn from actual events, *Wolf Creek*, is written and directed by Greg McLean. The film stars John Jarratt, Cassandra Magrath, Kestie Morassi, and Nathan Phillips. In addition to McLean, *Wolf Creek* is produced by David Lightfoot and co-produced by Matt Hearn. The executive producers are Gary Hamilton, Simon Hewitt, Martin Fabinyi, George Adams, Michael Gudinski, and Matt Hearn.

Dimension Films releases *Wolf Creek* nationwide on December 25, 2005.

BASED ON TRUE EVENTS

Wolf Creek's origins sprung from writer/director Greg McLean's want of re-conceptualizing the horror genre. Yet as the seed of his idea grew, it became deeply rooted in a far more bleak reality than anything cinema could conceive. "*Wolf Creek* has been around for about six years, when I wrote the first treatment for the film," recalls McLean. "It started with the notion of a terrifying, lone character inhabiting the Australian Outback. A character that reverses all of the clichés about the classic Australian bushman type, exemplified by *Crocodile Dundee* and Steve Irwin. Then over the years I heard about a couple of true cases that happened in Australia, one of them being the Ivan Milat case which is about a serial killer who would pick up hitchhikers on lonely highways and take them out into the woods and do horrific things to them. That case was influential in many ways because it had all of these elements that were so terrifying and scarier than anything I could possibly come up with. That case influenced the Mick Taylor character a lot in terms of what he did, what his background was, mode of operation. Most recently there was the Bradley Murdoch case, again, a very similar character who lived in Western Australia patrolling these lonely highways looking for victims who pulled over this car with two British backpackers in it and [allegedly] shot the guy, Peter Falconio, and tried to abduct the woman, Joanne Lees." [NOTE: AS OF 12/1/05, THIS CASE IS STILL ON TRIAL IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA.]

These cases have stunned Australians and terrified international onlookers. The crimes were characterized by unparalleled violence, brutality and chilling, cold-blooded planning. Australia, once the world's favourite beach suddenly became a place where lonely, deranged men with murder on their minds stalked empty highways. Looking for vulnerable tourists a long way from home.

McLean sought to bring truthfulness in his approach to the material, one you might not find otherwise in today's fantastical, big-budget horror offerings. "It was my intention to make *Wolf Creek* an unforgettable, shocking, and genuinely scary movie that is also distinctly Australian. In terms of producing the film, the breakthrough on a way to make it came with the advent of *Dogma 95* – the group of Danish filmmakers led by Lars Von

Trier (*Breaking the Waves*, *The Idiots*), who created a digital revolution by liberating themselves from the burden of huge production budgets. And even though many of their original ideas were cast aside as they became more successful, the original concepts served to prove that shooting in this way re-focuses a film on its essential elements, and re-asks the question: what do you need to make a good movie? Their answer was - a great idea, excellent actors and a digital camera." *Wolf Creek* was shot on Hi-Definition cameras and lenses akin to Robert Rodriguez's *Sin City* and *Once Upon A Time In Mexico*.

"That's where I started production-wise," McLean continues. "I wanted *Wolf Creek* to look like a recreation of a real crime and I thought, why not try to tell the story like a piece of journalism? Make it quite cold and cynical. Very observational, so the audience feels like they're watching a visual version of a piece of journalism."

AN AIR OF REALITY

Attaining that air of reality comes with a price. McLean is aware that he runs the risk of turning some viewers off due to the brazen and raw sequences of violence. He's quick to point out, though, that the film's carnage is a natural compliment to its themes. And the violence was not brought about without being carefully thought through. "My approach to the ugliness was the same way Mike Leigh would unflinchingly hold the camera on moments of intense human drama. The movie does contain explicit and intense scenes, they are disturbing. However, the film does explore the dull, mundane nature of violence, as the film is in some ways a voyeuristic journey into a world of pure evil. I believe it's the artist's job in some form to 'not look away' from our world and the human experience: both in its blackest elements of suffering and it's brightest moments of joy. And while it may be confronting at times, I feel it's important to expand the audience beyond what they would experience in their everyday lives. Cinema is a great medium in which to do that, as the audience is never actually in danger. We get to look into the horror with the reassurance in the end that, 'it's only a movie'."

One of *Wolf Creek's* emotionally taxing, nail-biting scenes involves Kristy bound to a steel support beam and cowering to Mick's mordant torture tactics. McLean admits it was difficult scene to push through for those in front and behind the camera. "That first torture scene in the shed was incredibly hard for the crew and for the actors, as well, because they completely committed to it. We shot that scene over a span of two or three nights and it was unbelievably hard for Kestie. She and John had to have an incredible amount of trust between them, and they had to have a trust in me that I would look after them and make sure they were okay. Essentially it was up to them because they worked out what they wanted to do together as actors in the scene and encouraged each other to do more. Kestie would tell John, 'The more intense you are the better my performance will be and I will just react to what you do.' They were allowing each other to go all the way, which was brave of them. At one point while shooting that scene, because the shed was so small, the crew and me had to be outside for the wide shot. It was just Kestie and John in there. I was listening on the headset and watching the scene unfold on the screen and, at one point, I literally sat up from my seat and thought something had gone wrong. I thought John had gone crazy and Kestie really wanted to

stop. It was really quite bizarre and at the end of the take I ran in there and they were both like, 'What are you talking about? We're doing what you asked us to do!' It was so convincing and so believable I thought he was really hurting her. I reacted how the audience will react, which is: how do I make this stop?!"

He adds, "I have always loved horror/sci-fi/fantasy comics and movies since childhood. I was going to be a painter and studied painting and drawing my whole life, constantly filling up sketchbooks with monsters from *Conan the Barbarian*, Marvel Superheroes, *Star Wars* characters and *Tales From the Crypt* creatures. My mother used to let me watch all the old Hammer Horror films. I think she liked them a lot and I was just blown away by them. So I guess, in retrospect, you could call the directorial technique finally devised for *Wolf Creek* a real meeting of high and low art – a classic bogeyman story using the techniques of "art" cinema to create an original cinematic experience."

CASTING

From the outset Greg advised casting agent Angela Heesom that having big name actors in the film was not a concern. "The only thing that was important was how relaxed and naturalistic they could be as a performer and understand the style of the filmmaking we were doing – which is completely observational of the action. Cassandra, Nathan and Kestie were a godsend as not only are they incredible actors, they absolutely embodied the spirit of this production, which is that everyone involved threw themselves into it completely."

Despite having a wish list of actors for the role of Mick Taylor early on, McLean found his man early on. "John was the first actor I met and after ten minutes, I knew that he was perfect. The difficulty with this movie is: how do you find an actor who can completely commit to doing that role and not judge the character? It would be very hard to do that performance because some part of you would be judging the character while you're doing it. John immediately got that when we met. He said, 'I understand this guy and how far I would need to go to make this work. It's also about not judging him and being inside him. As soon as I heard that I said, 'Alright, you totally go how far you need to go.'"

“I really believe that great directing is being good at casting and taking time to make the best choices possible,” McLean continues. “In the end I suppose it’s about responding to truth. The truth in a moment being performed by the actor. The way something is said. How well an actor can listen to another performer. When you spot an actor who can live and breathe and react and create in a really truthful way it’s incredibly inspiring. And I was inspired by these actors everyday making this movie with them. They give the movie it’s organic quality, and it’s rhythm, because in the shooting and cutting we were essentially following the lead of the their truthful exchanges throughout a scene. It’s like a golden thread that is pretty much the narrative line of the story, and I feel that in great films there is always that thread of truth that leads you through the journey of the characters. The writer is the first person to feel it but then it’s up the actors to pick it up and make it ‘their’ truth. I’m just so glad we had this cast because they completely and truthfully owned their performances. And that is what’s on the screen.”

DESIGN AND CINEMATOGRAPHY

“The style of *Wolf Creek* was always intended to be ultra-realistic, semi-documentary. We designed the film to appear to be little more than a ‘recreation’ of an actual criminal case,” says McLean. “The reason for adopting this storytelling technique is that when there’s an element of ‘truth’ to a horror film the audience is more readily able to become complicit. Fact based stories mean it is easier for an audience to suspend their disbelief, thus creating a much more intense reaction. Examples are *The Exorcist*, *The Amityville Horror*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *The Blair With Project*. All play with the idea that they are based on or are ‘true stories’. All went to great lengths stylistically to convince the audience of the ‘reality’ of their environment, characters and events. The object being with this kind of movie to generate maximum audience reaction. And have lots of fun doing it – as finally that’s what horror movies are for! As Stephen King said, ‘Without first belief, there can be no fear.’ This maxim by the master of horror is one we adhered closely to in the preparation, design and construction of *Wolf Creek*.”

A background rich in fine arts study also helped McLean lend a natural beauty to the film’s look, aiding its a dichotomous message. “There’s a level in which the landscape is part of the theme of the movie. This is an incredible, vast, isolated place that people come to. At the start of the film we experience Australia in a way that tourists come and

see - it's bright light and beautifully colored. Then the landscape towards the end of the film changes, it's still beautiful, it's still there, but it's incredibly cold. It's not warm and fuzzy, it's incredibly dark and distant. This is the background on which we as people run around and do the things we do. Some of them are great, some of them horrific."

POST-PRODUCTION / MUSIC / SOUND

The film was post-produced entirely in Adelaide, South Australia at Oasis Post Production. Marty Pepper and Dale Roberts oversaw this process, with Marty personally creating all of the visual digital effects, digital matte paintings and color grading the entire film. Pete Smith and Pete Best mixed and sound edited the film at Best FX in Adelaide. They collaborated heavily with composer Francois Tetaz in creating the film's textured audio blend of score and sound. Francois says, "We were always thinking about a sparse, electronic score that is quite abstract, and gradually builds so that in the last half of the film it virtually becomes one constant, building piece till the end. The music in the film subtly shifts as the movie dramatically changes gear half way through and becomes a completely different kind of experience. The challenge was in staying true to what was happening in the story and avoid 'horror' clichés. So it was scored much more from a place of, 'this is actually taking place,' historically, as opposed to trying to scare people with the music. So in that sense the music is simply supporting the storytelling. But it also works on other emotional and poetic levels throughout and suggests the larger themes running through the piece."

CAST

JOHN JARRATT (MICK TAYLOR)

Since graduating from the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) in 1973, his career of 30 years has encompassed all aspects of theatre, film and television, making him one of Australia's best-known personalities. John's film credits include Peter Weir's *Picnic At Hanging Rock*, *We of the Never Never*, *The Odd Angry Shot*, *Dead Heart*. and *All Men Are Liars* for which he received nominations from the AFI for Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role and from the Australian Film Critic's Circle, for Best Actor. John has also appeared in many television series, most recently *McLeod's Daughters*, and has written and presented for *Better Homes and Gardens*.

CASSANDRA MAGRATH (LIZ HUNTER)

Cassandra comes from a long line of performers and dancers. With a strong desire to act, Cassandra encouraged her mother to register her with an acting agency thus beginning her career at the early age of 11. A children's program entitled *Ocean Girl* was her break on the scene solidifying a successful future on television. Australian audiences identify Cassandra with a variety of roles on high-profile shows such as *The Wayne Manifesto*, *The Crash Zone*, and *SeaChange*. Her leap to the theatrical fare came in the 1996 rom-com *Hotel de Love* starring Aden Young and Saffron Burrows. *Wolf Creek* heralds her second big screen performance.

KESTIE MORASSI (KRISTY EARL)

With *Wolf Creek* as Kestie's eighth feature film performance, she is fast becoming one of the most prolific and original young actors working in Australia. Her ever-expanding repertoire, reflecting a broad diversity and range, already includes *Josh Jarman*, *Thunderstruck*, *Strange Bedfellows*, *Travelling Light*, *Darkness Falls*, *The Merchant of Fairness*, *Dirty Deeds* and *The Illustrated Family Doctor*. She is definitely a formidable actor to watch, as it seems there is nothing she cannot do.

NATHAN PHILLIPS (BEN MITCHELL)

Within the last four years Nathan has appeared in seven feature films in either starring or co-starring roles propelling him to the top of Australia's busiest feature film actors list. Nathan obtained his first leading role in the 2001 award-winning Sundance Film entry *Australian Rules*. His following two endeavours quickly put his acting abilities through the paces by offering up a balance of both action and comedy in *Warriors of Virtue 2*, shot in China, and the Australian comedy *Take Away*. It was upon the completion of playing 'Trig' in his third feature film *One Perfect Day* that Nathan received the offer of management in LA, where he spent many months auditioning, before being offered the lead role of 'Brandon' in *Under The Radar*. This year has found Nathan exploring the vast extremes within his craft by starring in the comedy feature, *You and Your Stupid Mate* and as the vulnerable yet determined Ben Mitchell in *Wolf Creek*.

CREW

GREG MCLEAN (PRODUCER, WRITER, DIRECTOR)

Greg has been writing, directing and producing for over ten years. His experience extends across theatre, film and television. After training as a Fine Artist specializing in painting, Greg attended the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), completing a graduate diploma in directing. His success there ensured work with one of Australia's most esteemed theatre directors, Neil Armfield, on his highly acclaimed production of *Hamlet* — which starred Geoffrey Rush, Cate Blanchett and Richard Roxburgh. Greg then worked with Baz Luhrmann and Catherine Martin, assisting the team on their production of *A Midsummer Nights Dream* for the Australian Opera and then in the early stages of pre-production on their film version of *Romeo & Juliet*. Greg has completed numerous short films as director and producer. His first, *Plead*, won a Gold award from the Australian Cinematographers Society (ACS). His last short film, *ICQ* has screened at several film festivals, including St. Kilda, Eye Candy, Short-trips, MUFF, Upstart Films. At The New York International Independent Film and Video Festival, it was awarded Best Director of a Short Film. *ICQ*, shot on 35mm Panavision and starring Sam Johnson, was nominated for Best Sound Design in the non-feature category of the Australian Film Institute awards, and received a Silver award for Cinematography from the ACS. The film is distributed by Flickerfest and screened on Showtime Movie Channel. Under his production company GMF (Greg McLean Film), Greg has produced and directed dozens of television commercials, corporate videos and film clips. These productions have enabled him to employ a wide variety of directorial styles, performance methods and post-production techniques. Over the past four years Greg has written a number of feature film screenplays across many genres. *Wolf Creek* is his first feature film. Greg's sophomore feature effort, *Rogue*, features a cast including Michael Vartan, Radha Mitchell, and John Jarratt.

DAVID LIGHTFOOT (PRODUCER)

David Lightfoot commenced a traineeship at the South Australian Film Corporation in 1982. Since then, he has held numerous positions in the film industry before becoming

a producer. He has worked on numerous occasions with international renowned directors including Rolf De Heer and Paul Cox. He has Line Produced many other productions as well, and today is considered one of the most experienced and accredited production executives in the country. His credits include *Bad Boy Bubby*, the mini-series *Three Forever* and *Spank!* He was co-producer and line producer of *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, consulting producer on *Innocence* and line producer on *Japanese Story*. David was the founding director of the Garage Shorts Film Festival, an Adelaide festival of short Australian films that awards the winning filmmaker with an all expenses paid trip to the Cannes Film Festival.

MATT HEARN (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, CO-PRODUCER)

Matt Hearn is the chief executive and founder of newly formed 403 Productions, one of the financing partners of *Wolf Creek*. Matt has enjoyed a close working relationship with Greg Mclean since they co-produced a number of music videos in 2002. Their collaboration on *Wolf Creek* was the driving force in bringing the film to the big screen. Matt moves into the film arena from over a decade's worth of international experience in advertising, marketing and product development, and brings a broad range of media skills to each production. Matt first realized his passion for the film industry after leaving advertising and taking a role as executive producer for internationally renowned visual-effects company – Rising Sun Pictures (Adelaide, Australia). In his time there, Rising Sun Pictures completed effects work for films such as *The Core*, *Queen of the Damned*, and *Red Planet*, plus film and advertising projects of all shapes and sizes in the Asia Pacific region. *Wolf Creek* is the first in a number of film project collaborations planned between 403 Productions and Greg Mclean.

GARY HAMILTON (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER)

Gary Hamilton began his twenty-five year career in the film industry in 1978 as editor of Australia's only film magazine at the time, Hoyts Movie News. He became advertising manager of Hoyts, then Victorian Manager and then General Sales Manager of United Artists in 1980, responsible for theatrical distribution in Australia. Two years later Gary re-joined Hoyts to become General Manager of Distribution in Australia. In 1984 Hamilton left Australia to head the Australian Film Commission in Europe. He traveled

extensively to every major film festival and market in the world helping to raise finance and sell many Australian film and television products including *Sweetie*, *The Piano*, and *The Navigator*, and developed lasting relationships with major Australian directors and producers.

Hamilton returned to Australia in 1990 to start Beyond Films, Australia's first foreign feature films sales company. Over the course of ten years, the company grew into one of the world's most successful and highly regarded foreign sales companies. He acquired, sold and marketed over 150 films including one of Australia's biggest international hits, *Strictly Ballroom*. Beyond Films has acquired rights to Australia's largest library of over 130 Australian films including *Love Serenade*, *Chopper*, and *Two Hands*; and has been involved in launching the careers of such talents as Russell Crowe, Cate Blanchett, Baz Luhrman, Hugh Jackman and Heath Ledger.

In April 2002 after 12 years with Beyond Films, Hamilton founded Arclight Films as co-owner with former Strand Releasing's Victor Syrmis. The new International Sales and Production company is partnered with one of the UK's most prolific production companies, The Spice Factory, and focuses on selling medium to high budget feature films, capitalizing on subsidies available in Europe, Canada and Australia.

Arclight Films was launched at Cannes in 2002 where it enjoyed enormous success with the Spice Factory film *Bollywood Queen* which was also selected for the Sundance Film Festival the same year.

Last year Hamilton launched a new genre division for the company, Darlight, with the classic horror film *The Last Sign* starring Andie McDowell; the futuristic martial arts *Silverhawk*, starring Michelle Yeoh; Hong Kong's biggest film of 2003 *The Twins Effect*, featuring Jackie Chan; and *Deck Dogz*, featuring legendary US twelve times World Champion Tony Hawk, written and directed by Steve Pasvolsky, Academy Award Nominee for *Inja*.

MARTIN FABINYI (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER)

Martin Fabinyi is the Chief Executive Officer of Mushroom. He produced the feature films

Gettin' Square and *Cut* and executive produced the feature films *Chopper* and *Horseplay*. Fabinyi's other production credits include the documentary on the indigenous Australian band Yothu Yindi, *Tribal Voice*, which was screened on the Discovery Channel and ABC-TV, the television specials *Next To Nothing* and *Nothing To Hide*, which were screened on the National Geographic Channel and the Nine Network, and the music specials *Kate Ceberano & Friends*, *The Singer & The Swinger* and *Counting the Beat*.

MICHAEL GUDINSKI (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER)

Founder of Mushroom Records in 1972, Michael Gudinski is one of Australia's most successful entrepreneurs. The Mushroom Group, of which he is the chairman, includes, alongside Mushroom Pictures, Mushroom Music Publishing, Frontier Touring and the record label Liberation Music. He co-produced one of Australia's most successful films of 2000, *Chopper*. He has also executive produced *Cut* and *Horseplay* for Mushroom Pictures.

WILL GIBSON (DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY)

Wills work as a director of photography covers a wide range of styles and formats. He is well known for his calm temperament and strong collaborative nature: "I work hard to bring visual integrity to a film, while remaining firmly grounded in the realities of time and budget. It's about putting the story on the screen in the most powerful and visual way."

His career began at Lemac Films in Melbourne, landing a position that was highly sought after as one of the few creditable training grounds in film production. Lemac's founder, John Bowring, continues to be one of the great gurus of cinematography in Melbourne, and he proved an inspirational mentor to the young Cinematographer. "It's hard to understate the value of my five years at Lemac. Working in a variety of areas from sound recording, flatbed film editing through to camera operating and lighting meant that I was exposed to almost every area of production in a hands on capacity. For the second half of my time there I worked solely as in house cameraman, cutting my teeth on a variety of styles and formats: music videos, film finish docos, corporate videos and TV station promotions. "

“As a DP images are everything to me, but it means nothing if they can’t be obtained within the constraints of time and budget. I’ve worked primarily in advertising and documentaries for much of the last 9 years, allowing me to create some beautiful pictures, but I always apply the same disciplines of efficiency to every project. It is this that I have built my reputation upon and for which I am well regarded by those I have worked with.” *Wolf Creek* is Will’s first feature film.

ROBERT WEBB (PRODUCTION DESIGNER)

Rob started working on period films as an art director and set dresser, which he found relatively easy, having had a background in antique and old wares dealing. He has worked largely on location-based films, all over the state of South Australia.

Rob enthuses about his work so far: “I’ve worked in so many different Art Department jobs in Adelaide and they have taken me to areas I would never in a lifetime have otherwise visited. Someone once said they couldn’t do without my childlike enthusiasm on-set. And that’s because I do throw myself into a script like I’m living it. I love the challenge of bringing the script to life visually, and throwing all my resources into doing just that.” *Wolf Creek* is Robert’s first feature film as production designer.

NICOLA DUNN (COSTUME DESIGNER)

Nicola Dunn has been working in the fashion/film industry for the past ten years. A graduate from The Whitehouse School of Fashion in Sydney, she started as an assistant freelance stylist, and the assistant fashion editor for Studio Magazine and Studio Brides. After traveling Europe and living in Austria and London, a move to New York led to an introduction to the film industry, where she was involved in music video, short film and television commercials. Returning to Australia, she moved to Melbourne, becoming a freelance fashion stylist whilst also developing her interest in film. In the past five years Nicola has been Costume Designer for four short films and over sixty TV commercials, including the Commonwealth Games 2006 campaign and most recently *Wolf Creek*, which is her first feature film. As a sought-after Melbourne stylist in fashion, she has

worked with clients such as Adidas, Nokia and Heineken, and for celebrities including Heath Ledger, Guy Pearce and Brian Brown.

JASON BALLANTINE (EDITOR)

Born in Adelaide, Jason has a Bachelor of Arts, Visual Arts from the University of South Australia with a major in Colour Photography and (ironically) a minor in Film Studies. During that period he won categories in consecutive years of the S.A. Young Film Maker's Award. His professional career first started when he worked in Adelaide for Post Production House 'Network 8.' Primarily, Jason cut his teeth here doing offline editing of TV commercials, documentaries and short films. And then in 1994 he relocated to Sydney to pursue freelance work on feature films. He secured various roles: from 1st assistant editor to visual effects editor. He has worked with many well-regarded directors and editors on high profile U.S. films, to low budget Australian films and telemovies, both within Australia and Internationally. Jason has been involved in feature films such as *Babe*, *Dark City*, *Babe: Pig in the City*, *Komodo*, *Mission Impossible 2*, *Moulin Rouge*, *Hearts in Atlantis*, *The Crocodile Hunter*, *The Quiet American*, *Star Wars Episodes 2 and 3*, and *Happy Feet*. Jason has been accredited as an AVID Certified Instructor to perform operational and technical classes for freelance editors and assistant editors, including The Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS), panelled Seminars locally and overseas, and reviewed industry manuals. *Wolf Creek* is Jason's first feature film as sole editor

RICK AND CHARMAINE CONNELLY (CONNELLY MAKE-UP AND SPECIAL FX TEAM)

Rick Connelly's professional career as a special make-up effects artist started in 1991 working for the Australian ABC and on various television commercials. Since then Rick Connelly has had the opportunity to work on many Australian and International film and television productions. The Australian Society of Make-up Artists (ASMA) Awards for Excellence has acknowledged Rick Connelly his work on *Chopper* and *Queen of the Damned*.

Rick Connelly's new passion for sharing industry knowledge began 1992 with the

establishment of Rick Connelly's Advanced Special Make-up Effects Course, and since then many of Sydney's Make-up Colleges have "sort after" Rick Connelly's vast experience in the areas of special make-up effects as a guest lecturer, including the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA). And many of Rick Connelly's previous students have gone on to work in both Australian and international films, television and theatre productions.

Charmaine (Wade) Connelly started a Hairdressing career in 1988, and in 1993 was awarded IHS Northern NSW Senior Hairdresser of The Year. Charmaine began her make-up career in 1996, and in 1997 started learning Special Make-up Effects with Rick Connelly. Charmaine has had the opportunity to apply a combination of hair, make-up and prosthetic make-up skills for commercials and on both Australian and international film and television productions. Charmaine has had opportunity to teach hair styling at various make-up colleges and has been an assistant teacher and course co-ordinator for Rick Connelly's Special Make-up Effects Course since 1998. Charmaine Connelly's work has been nominated for the ASMA Awards for Excellence in Music Video and Special Make-up Effects categories.

Rick and Charmaine married in 1999, and formed Connelly Make-up FX Team in the year 2000. Connelly Make-up FX Team specializes in conceptual design, life casting, sculpture, prosthetic make-up, character make-up and hair design. And have produced high quality and realistic special make-up effects and life like body parts for make-up, visual effects, special effects, stunts, and costume and art departments.

JEN LAMPHEE (HAIR AND MAKE-UP DESIGN)

Over Jen Lamphee's career, which spans the past 14 years, she has worked on a diverse range film and television projects. Her career started in hairdressing but she was soon looking for a change and greater creative challenges. Having been an artist with several successful exhibitions to her credit (both in portraits and figurative works), a client suggested trying make-up. She then set about completing a course both in day, stage and film make-up, and later further courses in advanced prosthetics. Since then Jen has flourished, quickly building an impressive list of feature film credits. She started assisting in 1990 on telemovies where she developed her skills further. Here she was

trained and mentored by some of the industries most respected technicians. In 1996 she had her first break in designing hair and make-up/effects on the AFI award winning film *Kiss or Kill*. From there she moved to Melbourne where she worked on *Hurrah* and *Crackers*. Jen then moved to Sydney, which remains her base today. Some of the Australian television series Jen has contributed to include: *Big Sky*, *Young Lions*, *Small Claims* and the American sci-fi series *Farscape*. This big budget project tested her prosthetic knowledge and design skills, as she was responsible for producing dozens of aliens every week. Her feature film credits include: *In a Savage Land*, *Cut*, *Sample People*, *Subterano*, *Airtight* and *Man-Thing*. Jen has just completed work on *Peaches*, starring Hugo Weaving, and *Pobby and Dingan*, the new film by English director Peter Cattaneo (*The Full Monty*).

FRANCOIS TETAZ (COMPOSER)

Francois Tetaz writes music for film, theatre and various projects. His recent work includes film scores for *The Hard Word*, *Thunderstruck* and *Wolf Creek*, and choreographic scores for Chunky Move's *Tense Dave* and Lucy Guerin's *Melt* and the score for artist Patricia Piccinni's exhibition at the 2003 Venice Biennale. As a producer, Tetaz works with a diverse range of independent artists. He is also the director and chief engineer at Moose Mastering. Other modern dance companies Francois has collaborated on include the Lucy Guerin Company, Shelley Lasica, Gerard Van Dyke (choreographer) and Kage. As a record producer he has worked with artists such as Lior, High Pass Filter, Biftek, SNOG, Casanovas, Paul Schutze, David Bridie, Bucket Rider, Paul McDermott, Selena Cross and James Anderson. He is also highly regarded for his installation work for Melbourne artist Patricia Piccinini; collaborating on the pieces "Sandman" in 2002 and "We are Family" in 2003.

PETE SMITH (SOUND MIXER)

Pete has 25 years experience in film and television sound postproduction specializing in film and television mixing. He has worked at Soundfirm Sydney/Melbourne, Atlab Sydney, Warner Roadshow Queensland, Crawford Productions Melbourne, Sound and Company Korea, Music and Effects Melbourne, Counterpoint Sydney, South Australian Film Corporation and DSV Gold Coast. Pete has garnered 4 AFI awards for best sound

and had 5 nominations in the same category. His credits span over 50 feature films and 22 television series as mixer, including: *Look Both Ways*, *Anacondas: The Hunt for the Blood Orchid*, *Somersault*, *Deck Dogz*, *Peaches*, *Thunderstruck*, *Japanese Story*, *The Nugget*, *Swimming Upstream*, *Inspector Gadget II*, *Honorable Wally Norman*, *Paradise Found*, *Charlotte Gray*, *Tempted*, and *Walk the Talk*.

PETE BEST (SOUND EDITOR / DESIGNER)

Pete Best's objective is to maintain his outstanding reputation in South Australia's film industry as a high-end audio designer and producer who creates a first class product, that is highly respected at a local, national and international level.

THE CAST

Mick Taylor

Ben Mitchell

Liz Hunter

Kristy Earl

Old Man

Car Salesman

Mechanic

Petrol Attendant

Barry

Barry's Mate

Flashback Dad

Flashback Mum

Flashback Girl

Irish Backpacker

Swedish Backpacker

Swedish Backpacker #2

John Jarratt

Nathan Phillips

Cassandra Magrath

Kestie Morassi

Gordon Poole

Guy O'Donnell

Phil Stevenson

Geoff Revell

Andy McPhee

Aaron Sterns

Andrew Reimer

Vicki Reimer

Isabella Reimer

David Rock

Jenny Starvall

Guy Petersen

THE CREW

Producer, Writer, Director

Producer

Co Producer, Executive Producer

Executive Producers

Director of Photography

Film Editor

Production Designer

Costume Designer

Make-up and Hair Design

Greg Mclean

David Lightfoot

Matt Hearn

Gary Hamilton

Simon Hewitt

Martin Fabinyi

George Adams

Michael Gudinski

Will Gibson

Jason Ballantine

Robert Webb

Nicola Dunn

Jen Lamphée

Special Make-up Effects

Connelly Make-up FX

Team

Composer

Francois Tetaz

Casting

Angela Heesom

Line Producer

David Lightfoot

Financial Controller

Trudy Talbot

Script Editor

Mac Gudgeon

2nd Unit Director

Matt King

Production Manager/Coordinator

Anna Molyneaux

First Assistant Director

Ric Beecroft

Domestic Distribution

Darlight Films

Mushroom Pictures

International Sales

Arclight Films

Financiers

Film finance Corp.

Australia

South Australian Film Corp.

403 Productions

Production Company

The True Crime Channel

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GREG McLEAN – IN HIS OWN WORDS...

Writer / Director Greg McLean gives an insight to the making of this exceptional film...

INSPIRATIONS:

Growing up, I was always a funny kid: into horror comics, loving the supernatural, sci-fi, and all things weird and strange. Actually, I formed a ghost-hunting club when I was 10, which morphed into a Jedi training school when I was 12. Alongside all my Star Wars action figures sat a Frankenstein's monster and various skeletons and hellish creatures. Movies like the old Hammer Horror classics were playing as Mum ironed clothes and I hid behind a couch.

Around this time I was also lucky (or unlucky) enough to see Peter Weir's film Picnic at Hanging Rock. We lived in the country. It was summer so we had the TV out on the back veranda. The real night lurked just beyond the TV set as I watched, eyes wide and jaws on the ground. For those who don't know the movie, a group of teenage girls from a conservative private school go on a picnic in the Australian bush. Some go missing. Mystery ensues as to what really happened. Doesn't sound very scary, does it? But when you're 12, watching a movie about "real events" that took place not far from where you live, on your porch in the dark, it does the job. So much so that I'd say this movie is still one of the biggest influences on me as a director.

Subsequently there's a lot of Picnic in Wolf Creek – in my movie, three backpackers break down in the outback and a stranger picks them up. There are nasty consequences. Hell, you could almost call it Picnic at Wolf Creek.

FUNDING:

I can confirm that financing your first film takes 10 years and financing your next takes 10 months. I spent years struggling to get my first shot at directing, and in all seriousness was starting to question whether it would ever happen at all. It was in this atmosphere of sheer desperation and determination that the key elements of Wolf Creek lined up. The biggest was deciding to write a script that, if all else failed, I could shoot with my friends on borrowed video equipment - the film was originally going to be shot on mini DV cameras. So it was sparse, tight, fast, and very doable. I wanted nothing to

go wrong, so I became the producer as well. It turned out people really dug the script and the project started to gather momentum, particularly after producers David Lightfoot and Matt Hearn joined the party. We'd worked together on various projects and knew we wanted to make a film together. We all hustled and worked our asses off. David budgeted and scheduled, Matt raised private finance, I secured a letter of intent for international sales and a domestic deal, and soon we had something concrete to approach the Australian film funding bodies with.

I'm sure the government funding agencies were cautious about financing a dirty little horror movie that features the line, "You're all the same, you foreign cunts." Not exactly politically correct, witty repartee. But thankfully they saw the potential and gave us the go ahead. We were off to the races.

CASTING:

*There's a young actor called John Jarratt in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, who even as a kid I knew had an incredible screen presence, years before I knew what those words are supposed to mean. The performance astounded me for its subtlety and ease. He just looked like he was behaving. 'Not' acting. Fifteen years later I met him and cast him as the lead in *Wolf Creek*. I don't know what the symmetry means but it's beautiful. Luckily for me he was even better than I'd remembered. He was the first and only actor I saw for Mick Taylor. He knew how to do this role and what it would take on his part to pull it off. One of the best days of my life was meeting John, as I knew then as a writer I could relax because someone else was there who understood how to take what I'd written and make it real.*

I spread the net wide for the other three key roles of Liz, Kristy and Ben. I was looking for people who could be absolutely believable, had naturalness and confidence in just 'being' on screen. And of course they had to be irresistible to watch, great at improvising, and likable as people. Kestie Morassi who plays Kristy had auditioned for my short film, so I was aware of her work. She's a great actor, a fascinating personality and has remarkable commitment to her performance. Cassandra Magrath had been doing TV in Australia for years, so as an actor she's incredibly confident with her craft. She came back for three test auditions, as casting Liz was incredibly hard. She had to have so many qualities in order for the part to work; be beautiful without being

inaccessible, warm, honest, and resilient. Cassandra nailed 'em all. Nathan Phillips I wanted for another part in a film I was working on that fell over. We'd never actually met, but spoken a few times on the phone. He was having trouble getting into the auditions as he was doing other things at the time. So I'd basically written him off. At 6:30pm on the last day of casting he came in. We spoke for half an hour. He was back in the running. I insisted he do a test of a few scenes on tape. They arrived and that test is probably some of the best screen acting I've ever seen.

MAKING THE MOVIE:

Once we got the green light we moved very fast, because John had a conflict of schedule unless we were shooting by a particular date. But that was fine with me, 'cause I'd been waiting my whole life to direct a film. I was like a starving greyhound behind a gate that'd been watching rabbits run by. Now the gate was open. Pre-production was a blur or meetings, location scouts, storyboarding, costume and production design, rehearsals. Then the shoot began. The first week was driving scenes. Lots of camera mounts. The actors getting to know each other. I could hear them owning their characters more and more as they improvised. The crew was getting a rhythm going.

Then we went into the Outback in a huge convoy. Half the crew was staying in a town while the other half were staying at shearer's quarters on a nearby property. The place itself was incredible, the farm covering thousands of hectares. We shot the car chase – blocking off a national highway. Our cameraman proved to be as fearless - or insane - as John Jarratt, who did all his own driving and stunts. Will Gibson was hanging off the back/front/side of a pick-up truck holding the cameras, traveling at ridiculous speeds and still getting perfect frames every time. Amazing. The landscape was also blowing us away. Then it started to rain. We'd been told it had not rained in this particular place for ten years. We were safe. No possible way we could be getting any weather trouble. It didn't stop. In fact, it got really heavy.

After shooting our first day at the location, which is the scenes at the base of Wolf Creek Crater, we just made it out before the roads were closed. The red outback dust had turned into deep slush. Overnight. The next day we were told we couldn't go back to the location. And half the crew was stranded at the Sheep Station because the roads were so bad cars were running off them and bogging as soon as they tried to reach us. We

*were in rather deep sh*t. Thinking fast, we found some new locations within five minutes' drive of base camp. After some courageous four wheel driving they arrived. And we managed to shoot the day's schedule, getting all the scenes we needed. It was great, and was a tribute to the spirit of letting nothing get in our way that we found solutions to problems that would have shut down many other productions. We called this little helper to the film 'the vibe' or 'the force'. Every time we dodged a bullet we'd look to each other and say, 'the vibe'. Or, 'the force is with us'.*

The days were unbelievably fast. Set-up times, takes and re-sets were screaming along - our record day was 65 genuine set-ups in one day. I've always liked to shoot fast, and always storyboard everything so I've got the sequence structure in my head in advance so I'm not working it out on the day. But even with all the planning, sometimes things just don't work out and you've got to get really creative to keep things moving. Because on a budget and schedule that tight, there's no going back.

*One f**k up that's funny in hindsight was the old man getting his head blown off. I had the brilliant idea of making a very realistic, life-sized dummy of the old guy, packing the head with blood, steaks and explosives and at a pre-arranged cue point, detonate the head and yank back the body as if he'd been literally blown off his feet. Sounds like a great effects shot, right? So when we came to shoot this shot, I said to the art department guys, "great, lets see the dummy". So imagine my brain melting down when they pull out half a foam store dummy from the 1950's - white - with a steel pole running down to a base. No costume. No wig. F**king nothing! The 1st AD then rushed up and said, "come on, Greg, you got half an hour to get these shots". So we had to give it a go. The result is probably the worst visual effect shot in history. It's a piece of filmmaking that'd end up on Ed Wood's cutting room floor. We tied a cable to the base, stuffed the foam head with explosives and counted down. On "go" half the head just "pops" off, some red liquid drips down the side. A second passes then the whole thing is yanked off-screen.*

We weren't giving each other high fives any more. Luckily, our brilliant stunt guy had another idea, which was to get someone with a similar body type to the 85 year old man playing the role - me - put them in the costume and coordinate a fall and shoot a blood spurt on the window. It couldn't be worse. I got into costume, learned in three and half

minutes how to do a stunt fall and we shot it. And the final result works remarkably well. So I guess it's that spirit of finding creative solutions to problems and never taking no for an answer that informed the whole shoot and delivered something we were really proud of onto the screen.

There are so many incredible moments I remember from making this film, I think mainly because the experience was so emotionally intense for every one of us. There was a lot at stake. I knew if I didn't pull this off my chances of ever making another film would be slim to non-existent. On the last night of the shoot, we were literally down a hole in the ground shooting Ben's wake-up and discovery sequence. There were dead animal bones in there. It was damp. The roof was almost falling in. There was about twelve of us in a space about the size of a shower. But we shot the material. When I called "that's a wrap," we were all overcome by this amazing feeling of satisfaction. We had a long way to go in post-production but we'd shot the movie and beaten some pretty huge odds. I turned to [director of photography] Will Gibson and said, "let's do this again as soon as we possibly can". It was like getting off the most mind-blowing ride at the theme park you've ever been on and wanting to run back to the head of the line for another go. It was better, fun, and harder, than I could have possibly imagined. And then it got even weirder.

PICKED UP BY DIMENSION FILMS:

We cut the film in record time, scored, sound mixed, and got the final print ready to delivery to our sales agency. They had submitted a cut to Sundance. We didn't really think we'd get in so we completely forgot about it. But we did get in. We couldn't believe it. So I went on holiday to Western Australia where my folks live. It's by the beach, so I was kicking back, hanging around the house one day in my shorts, beer in hand. There's a message on my phone. "Harvey and Bob want to buy the movie." I think I sat there for a while looking at the ground. Trying to work out what that meant, not daring to think that two of the world's most successful movie moguls wanted to pick up the film. Miramax, Dimension and Harvey and Bob Weinstein were part of so many of the movies and directors I'd spent all my formative years watching and being inspired by. They are legends. So I called and it was real, they wanted in. It was totally surreal but was an amazing experience and pretty soon we'd closed a deal. Things were looking good.

THE FESTIVAL CIRCUIT:

Getting into Sundance was great, as again, I'd been watching all the directors and films that started their lives and film careers there for years. And the place itself is like a moviemakers' pilgrimage: going into the mountains, to a place and festival that originated as a creative focal point for thinking outside the square. The focus on originality, freshness, and new talent was everywhere. So it's got an amazing atmosphere, particularly if you've got a movie playing. There was a huge bunch of us - we had 21 cast and crew present - in tow so we partied a hell of a lot, probably secretly getting rid of our nerves leading up to our screening. The screenings were fantastic, people seemed to dig it and there was a 'buzz' around Park City. Walking up Main Street people we didn't know would scream out "Wolf Creek" from passing SUV's.

*We felt like we were Bon Jovi on tour in '82. So in the middle of doing interviews, photo shoots, meeting agents, managers, and lawyers I got chosen to be one of Variety's 10 Directors to watch, so that was another honor. And another amazing event: I'd had my short film in a few smaller festivals some years before, but being in Sundance with a film is hard to describe. The energy, excitement for movies, opportunities to meet your heroes - Hal Hartley, whose movie *Trust* inspired me so much years earlier, took time to talk to this new director and then discuss the finer points of distribution. There were many incredible moments during the festival. A few very cool ones.*

Robert Redford spoke to the directors about the genesis of Sundance in a way that only a Hollywood legend can. The importance of seeking and nourishing the next generation. Of not stagnating. To keep the creative search alive in cinema. A few of us went snowmobiling in the mountains through mountain trails. I'd never done this before and it's incredibly fun, particularly when our executive producer Matt Hearn got a bit cocky and rolled his snowmobile about four minutes after we got them. Don't tell the rental guys. The other cool thing was someone told me there were some people from Cannes there. They'd seen my film and wanted to talk to me. "What about?" I asked innocently.

CUT TO:

May, 2005. Balcony of the Majestic Hotel. Cannes. France. Below, the festival is in full swing. It's the most beautiful place in the world full of the most beautiful people in the world. Right now, before the sun goes down, crowds of them are swarming toward the

Palace Theatre across the street because history is about to take place. Star Wars: Episode III is having its premiere there tonight. With George Lucas and the cast in tow. The doors of the balcony swing open, I step out with two tickets to Star Wars in my hand, drop my bags and turn to the camera, "Sweeeeeeeet." I'm not kidding. That's how it happened. Recalling the rest of Cannes is going to be a really boring read, because all it will be is "incredible, amazing, awesome, mind-blowing, WTF!"

One amazing film, party, screening, event after the other. I mean the French know how to put on a film festival, and Cannes is such an amazing piece of history and everywhere you go, particularly as a director, you come face to face with evidence of the masters who'd been there before you and their decades of groundbreaking cinema. You feel a link to the cinema of the past, present and future at Cannes, which is humbling and invigorating at the same time. You feel the power of film there as cultural force. The atmosphere is electric. The people unforgettable. I was in the quinzaine des realisateurs section - who were fantastic to us - and our screenings there were nerve wracking, but wild at the same time. Again there was something beautifully cyclical about me growing up and my life being changed by Star Wars, Jim Jarmusch's films, and Frank Miller comics. Then sitting a few rows away at screenings or hanging out in a bar.

Cannes was an incredible experience for my whole team and I. We loved it and felt really honored to be a part of it. And the way they embraced the film was moving beyond words. (A few choice moments: Michael Madsen at the Wolf Creek after party. I wanted to go up and say, "that woman deserves her revenge, and, we deserve to die." But I thought he might not like my reading of the line and throw me off the boat. The closing night party with a 25-minute fireworks display. Going to my final screening at two in the morning, doing a Q&A afterwards at about four in the morning, getting home as the sun was rising to drink champagne on the balcony. Harvey Weinstein introducing Cassandra Magrath and myself at a lunch moments before introducing the Sin City cast. That was really cool. And I can confirm that Jessica Alba is approximately one thousand times hotter in real life than on screen.

All in all, the last six months or so has been probably the most life changing, intense and challenging time of my life – and it's all because of a dirty little horror movie called Wolf

Creek. And so my cinematic journey begins. I can't wait.

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