



**SÉLECTION OFFICIELLE**



FESTIVAL DE CANNES

# **NATURE'S WAY**

A film Directed by Jane Shearer



## **PRESS KIT**

**I N T E R N A T I O N A L   S A L E S**

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**N E W   Z E A L A N D   F I L M**

## **Essential Information**

Format:	35mm
Film Ratio:	1: 2.35 (super35mm)
Sound:	Dolby 5.1
Video Format:	Digital Betacam
Video Format Ratio:	Anamorphic
Running Time:	10 mins (plus credits)
Country of Production:	New Zealand
Date of completion:	April 2006
Producer:	Leanne Saunders Severe Features Limited Email: <a href="mailto:severe@paradise.net.nz">severe@paradise.net.nz</a> Tel. +64 21 764 198
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## **Logline**

Deep within the forest, there is no rest.

## **Synopsis**

A young girl is murdered and left for dead deep in native forest. The murderer's first instincts tell him he'll get caught, but as time goes on he thinks he's got away with it. Unfortunately for him, first instincts are usually right as nature aids revenge.

## **Festival Screenings**

2006 Festival de Cannes – Official Selection (Short Film in Competition), France

# **NATURE'S WAY**

## **Director's Notes- Jane Shearer**

Coming from New Zealand, missing persons are not common, so when someone does disappear it attracts nation wide attention. With children, their names are forever etched in New Zealanders minds, and the longer they are lost, the more they become folk law.

And the murderers, seamlessly slipping back into society, living their lives as though it never happened, what becomes of them. I wanted to explore the idea that it all catches up with you in the end, and how karma, conscience or the spiritual ends up being the deliverer of justice.

This tale intends to spook, while inviting the viewer to decide whether the murderer is getting haunted, or is it all in his mind. In the end it is entirely how you view the world that will determine the answer to that question.

NATURE'S WAY isn't designed to be a series of jumps, but a slow unfolding tale reminiscent of those told fireside. I wanted to make a film with no dialogue, strong on visuals as if it is the audience's memory of a folk tale, but presented in the modern context.

## **Production Notes**

The story is an original idea by writing team Jane Shearer and Steve Ayson. The project was conceived and developed while they were in artist residence at Chateau de La Napoule. Shearer and Ayson previously spent six months at the Maurits Binger Film Institute on the writers programme.

NATURE'S WAY is set in two distinct landscapes; the forest, and the new modern suburb that threatens to invade and destroy it. These two elements are embedded in the journey of the film, and visually tell a story that is interwoven with the deeper themes.

The forest is uniquely New Zealand, and is virgin native bush. A canopy of punga and mature native trees is underscored by dense undergrowth of fern.

The suburb is one that exists in almost any developing city and town around the world where the forest is being cleared for new housing.

In NATURE'S WAY the murderers house is on the very edge of a forest. The fence around the man's property holds a small gate that provides a link from his manicured domain to the as yet untouched forest beyond it.

In realising the story's elements there was incredible attention needed to the particular look and tone of the visual elements. Cinematographer Andrew Commis is one of Australia's emerging talents and has brought an understated darkness to the photography. Commis has won Gold and Silver Australian Cinematographers Society

Awards for his work to date. His most recent short work as cinematographer, BLUE TONGUE played at Critics Week (SIC), Festival de Cannes 2005.

The film is entirely without dialogue, so one of the crucial elements came into place when Jack Hutchings (editor, CRACKER BAG, Winner Golden Palm, Festival de Cannes 2003) came on board to edit the film. Without the director meeting him, he committed on the basis of the script.

Equal importance was the score, and Rachel Shearer is known for her edgy and unique composition and sound design and pared back sensibility. She has provided a stunning and visceral soundtrack.

NATURE'S WAY is produced by Severe Features and financed by the Short Film Fund of New Zealand Film Commission, which is handling international sales.

## **Cast**

### **Man Matthew Sunderland**

Sunderland is a rising cinematic star in New Zealand. He has a strong theatre background, but impresses with his powerful, yet vulnerable male performances on screen.

He has appeared in five feature films by emerging director talent from New Zealand. Notably CHRISTMAS and WOODENHEAD have enjoyed considerable festival and critical success, screening in official selection at Toronto, Edinburgh, Locarno and Melbourne amongst other festivals.

Sunderland is cast as lead actor in a new feature, UNTITLED, currently in production (executive producer Tim White NED KELLY, No. 2).

He is a graduate of Toi Whakaari (New Zealand Drama School) 1987. His agent is Auckland Actors, New Zealand.

### **Yvonne Katrin O'Donnell**

O'Donnell is a new face to the screen, but gives a focused and luminous presence to this incredibly challenging role for a child actor.

Her agent is 62 Models and Talent, New Zealand.

## **Credits**

### **Co-Writer/ Director Jane Shearer**

Jane finished school to further studies in appropriation of Maori Art; there she attained a Diploma in Contemporary Maori Art from Wellington Polytechnic New Zealand in 1993.

From 1996 Shearer worked in the Film industry in a variety of capacities including assistant director, casting and art department.

In between, Shearer worked as an award-winning creative in the advertising industry. Selected highlights include: 'Best New Creative' at the New Zealand Axis Advertising Awards 2000. Silver Cannes Lion 2000 for copy writing and art direction; Silver One Show Pencil, USA 2000; Silver Axis, New Zealand 2000; Silver Award - copy writing, Australia 2000.

Shearer was invited to be a full member of British Design and Art Direction (D&AD) 2000.

She has worked for international agencies as creative including KesselsKramer Amsterdam, Abbots Mead Vicker BBDO London, Colenso BBDO, Publicis Mojo Auckland, New Zealand.

In 2004 she was invited to attend the prestigious Maurits Binger Film Institute on a residential Maori scholarship, and developed there the horror feature project THE FRENCH DOORS.

As artist in residence at Chateau Lanapoule, Shearer later conceived and developed the script for NATURE'S WAY with her co-writer partner Steve Ayson.

Ayson and Shearer have since formed script development and consultancy company Lake David.

### **Co-Writer Steve Ayson**

Steve began his film career in 2000 having previously worked as an award-winning copywriter and art director in advertising for 10 years and studied Graphic Design to diploma level.

He launched this new direction with a self-funded short THE JOB. He then wrote and directed NZFC funded 35mm short film The FRENCH DOORS in 2001.

THE FRENCH DOORS, a dark horror/thriller, has gone on to attain critical and commercial success. It screened in competition at Clermont-Ferrand 2002 and in official selection at Aspen, Locarno and San Sebastian International Film Festivals 2002. It has sold to film channels in France (CANAL+), England (Channel 4), Italy and Spain.

Ayson was awarded 'Best Director Australasia' at Locarno and THE FRENCH DOORS was voted Top Drama on Atom Films website in 2004.

In between this he cleared three rusted, collapsed and full-of-junk garages off his land with his bare hands before joining production company The Sweet Shop to expand his commercials directing career.

Focus on writing saw him co-write short film THE PINK BATCH directed by Jane Shearer.

He is co-writing the feature developed from THE FRENCH DOORS with Jane Shearer and was attached to the project while at the Maurits Binger Film Institute in Amsterdam.

Ayson is currently directing commercials worldwide.

He is also developing two other feature film scripts and a documentary.

## **Producer Leanne Saunders**

Saunders commenced her screen industry career working for Working Title Films UK and Manifesto Film Sales, London. She has worked for 10 years in the industry in production and AD roles on projects ranging from no-budget to large budget studio.

She has worked as a satellite commercials producer for Sydney and Auckland Film Company, FAT Film Limited and Black Stump Films.

Recently Saunders spearheaded a new digital initiative out of New Zealand under the banner of Headstrong, in association with The New Zealand Film Commission. The first feature in production is action comedy, THE DEVIL DARED ME TO. Headstrong have a slate of three more feature films to go into production in the next twelve months.

Saunders also set up Severe Features in 2000 to develop and work with exceptional and fresh talent. Projects in development have been officially selected for SPAAMart Australia 2005 (ICE BLOSSOM) and CineMart Netherlands 2006 (GARY aka A SONG OF GOOD).

Severe produced CHRISTMAS (2003) which screened in official selection at Toronto, Edinburgh, Locarno and Melbourne International Film Festivals 2003, Seoul SefNef and Cardiff 2004.

CHRISTMAS was winner of all major categories for Digital Feature at the Academy of Film and Television New Zealand Film Awards 2003 including 'Best Digital Feature', 'Best Script', 'Best Performance' and 'Best Technical Contribution (Art Direction)'.

Saunders is credited as Executive Producer on six 35mm short films in release in conjunction with the New Zealand Film Commission, selected highlights include – WATER (2003) 35mm, In Competition: Sundance 2004; NO ORDINARY SUN (2003)

Official Selection: Edinburgh 2004; BEAUTIFUL (2002) 35mm, In competition: Sundance 2002; Official selection: New York 2002, Melbourne 2002; Toronto 2002; THE FRENCH DOORS (2001) 35mm, Official selection: Clermont Ferrand 2002; Melbourne 2002; Aspen 2002; and JUNK (2001) 35mm, Runner-up Nescafe Australasian Short Film Awards 2001; Best Short Film, Nokia Film Awards, NZ 2001.

Saunders was awarded WIFT NZ Emerging Producer Award 2004.

## **Director Of Photography Andrew Commis**

Andrew has shot over 20 short films including BLUE TONGUE (2005) directed by Justin Kurzel [Official selection, Critics Week Festival De Cannes 2005, New York, Oberhausen, 'Best Australian Short' at Melbourne International Film Festival 2005] and LITTLE ECHO LOST (1999) directed by Armagan Ballantyne [Official selection Telluride, New York, Camerimage Cinematography Festival Poland, Certificate of Merit Chicago].

His work has won 10 Australian Cinematographers Society Awards along with Best Cinematography accolades at Noosa International Film festival, Fitzroy Short Film Festival and the South Australian Film Awards.

Andrew has also shot music videos for the likes of Midnight Oil, Thievery Corporation, You Am I and over 100 television commercial's.

He holds a Master of Arts degree in Film & Television, specialising in Cinematography from the Australian Film Television & Radio School in Sydney.

He is currently in production on NAKED ON THE INSIDE, a feature length documentary about body identity produced by Radical Media New York and directed by Kim Farrant.

## **Editor Jack Hutchings**

### EDITING AWARDS

2005 Kodak Gongs - Young Editor of the Year

2003 AFI Winner - Best Editing of a Non-Feature Film CRACKER BAG (2003)

CRACKER BAG won Golden Palm Festival De Cannes 2003; Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk 'Special Mention' Berlin International Film Festival 2004.



## **Production Designer Ashley Turner**

Turner has worked on award winning short films and features as Production Designer and Art Director.

Turner was awarded Best Design at the New Zealand Film Awards 2005 for his work on short film, NO ORDINARY SUN (2003). This screened at Edinburgh, Slamdance, Los Angeles Film Festival (Shorts) and Hof Film Festival, Germany (Hofer Filmtage).

He is credited as Production Designer on PLANET MAN, winner of Canal+ Best Short in Critics Week, Festival de Cannes 1996.

He has production designed many international commercials and was awarded British Design and Art Direction (DA&D) Award for Best Art Direction, Television 2003.

## **Composer Rachel Shearer**

Rachel Shearer has released a series of music projects and performed live under the moniker Lovely Midget since 1997 with a 10" vinyl release on US label 'Ecstatic Peace', a CD on NZ label Corpus Hermeticum in 2000 and a 2003 CD release with US label Family Vineyard.

As Lovely Midget, Rachel Shearer creates music from sounds that have been digitally stripped and scrubbed down to their raw underlying textures. These are then painstakingly reconstructed into new audio environments.

Rachel recently was invited by Artspace in Sydney to perform as part of a Sound Art festival 'Typhoon' Nov 2005.

Upcoming projects are a commission from the Wellington Film Archives to compose music for live performances in May 2006 to selected archival films and a 2006 CD release on US label Family Vineyard.

Since 1999 Rachel has been working as a freelance sound designer/ sound editor for feature films and television, including Sound Design on feature film, CHRISTMAS (dir. Gregory King) 2003.

Since 1998 Rachel has held various part-time teaching positions as both a Lecturer and Senior Tutor in Time-based Arts at Manukau Institute of Technology, Elam School of Fine Arts and the Music and Audio Institute of NZ, all in Auckland.

## **Casting Director Stuart Turner**

Turner trained at Toi Whakaari (New Zealand Drama School) from 1989-90. He then worked as an actor for nine years in local screen drama.

He established Catch Casting in 2002 (specialising in street casting) after working as a freelance-casting director. He was Casting Director on New Zealand feature STICKMEN and did additional casting on Sundance Audience Award winning feature, WHALE RIDER.

Turner won Gold Axis at the New Zealand Advertising Awards as Director/ Casting Director.

## **Script Consultant Eveline Verwoerd**

Verwoerd studied Screenwriting at the Dutch Film and Television Academy and Film and Television Dramaturgy at the University of Amsterdam. In her Graduation Thesis she focussed on Joseph Campbell and Christopher Vogler and in particular, their influence for screenwriters and script editors. She also completed the Script Editing Course at the Binger Film Lab in Amsterdam.

Since 2000 she has worked as a script-editor / consultant for several screenwriters and organisations, such as Dutch public broadcaster VARA, Flemish Film Fund, Dutch Film Fund.

In 2005 she founded the Dutch branche organisation for script-editors, script-doctors and story developers, [www.vedra.nl](http://www.vedra.nl).

She has also worked as a scriptwriter for several film and television productions. Her debut DE TERUGKEER VAN ELMER (2001, Gerrard Verhage) was nominated for the Grand Prix Europa 2001.

## **Executive Producers Short Intercept**

Short Intercept is a short film Executive producer group. Nik Beachman is a producer of acclaimed and award-winning short films. Filmmaker Andrew Bancroft is Cannes-award winning writer, director and producer of short films, television and documentary. Hone Kouka is a celebrated Maori playwright and screenwriter. As a team they are currently developing and financing feature film project MAHANA.

CAST

MAN  
YVONNE

Matthew Sunderland  
Katrin O'Donnell

CREDITS

WRITERS  
DIRECTOR  
PRODUCER  
PRODUCTION COMPANY  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Jane Shearer and Steve Ayson of Lake David

CINEMATOGRAPHER  
PRODUCTION DESIGNER  
CASTING DIRECTOR  
EDITOR  
COMPOSER

Jane Shearer  
Leanne Saunders  
Severe Features  
Nik Beachman  
Hone Koaka  
Andrew Bancroft  
Andrew Commis  
Ashley Turner  
Stuart Turner  
Jack Hutchings  
Rachel Shearer