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presents

LAST RIDE

A film by Glendyn Ivin

Based on the novel THE LAST RIDE by Denise Young

Australia, 100 minutes. Unrated.

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Short Synopsis

Shot in stunning widescreen cinematography, **LAST RIDE** is a heart-breaking road movie through the ravishing, remote and rugged South Australian outback as ex-jailbird fugitive father Kev (Mr. Weaving in a tender and bravura performance) and 10-year old son Chook (newcomer Tom Russell) are on the run from the law.

Based on Denise Young's acclaimed novel, **LAST RIDE** is the riveting and morally complex portrayal of a brutal yet loving petty criminal struggling with parenthood, as father and son pit themselves against the elements and each other. In order to survive, Chook will have to make a choice between what he knows to be right and the love of his father, a decision which will have devastating consequences for both of them.



Long Synopsis

Kev, a petty-criminal, and his ten year-old son, Chook, are on the run. Dumping their car they travel by bus, into the unforgiving outback. Arriving in a small town they land on the doorstep of Kev's ex-girlfriend, Maryanne. She's not pleased to see Kev, but finds it hard to resist his charm. Chook wants to stay with her, but the secrets he shares with his Dad forces them to keep moving.

Hitchhiking, they travel across the barren plains of the interior and bed down for the night in old Afghan museum. Here Chook learns a little of his heritage and is captured by the magic of the Persian costumes and photos of the past. While Chook sleeps Kev ducks out for food but is drawn to the local pub. A news story on TV reveals why they are running. Max, a friend, has been murdered and the police are on the hunt. Kev realises he is in more trouble than he bargained for, but keeps it to himself. He returns to the museum to find Chook has befriended and confided in a local Muslim doctor. Suspicious Chook has told the doctor too much, Kev angrily assaults her and steals her car.

On the road again, Kev and Chook drive through landscape Kev once shared with his own brutal father. They drift into a National Park, where they lay low in a hidden camp amongst giant river gums. Kev's wish to gift Chook a 'real bush experience' results in a lousy attempt to teach his son to swim, which sparks a feeble but ominous retaliation from Chook. Despite Kev's insensitivity and the pressure of knowing that the police are on their trail, father and son find some common ground and begin to

bond.

Returning from a morning swim, they find their camp overrun by police. Panicked, Kev steals a 4WD and they flee cross-country, further into the desert and the unknown. Lack of food, water and sleep find them taking a short cut across a salt lake, another familiar landmark from Kev's past. Here Kev confesses to Chook that Max is dead. Angry and confused, Chook attacks his father who dumps him in the middle of the salt to teach him a lesson. Seemingly abandoned, Chook discovers the inner strength to make it to the other side, where Kev finds his son transformed into a disturbingly different boy.

An altercation at a roadhouse sees Kev attack the owner and steal a rifle, all under Chook's steely gaze. They travel silently through the night to a remote desert camp where Kev reckons Chook may have been conceived. Chook becomes increasingly suspicious of his father's assurances that 'everything will be fine'. He realizes that to survive he must decide how their story will end and is forced to take action that will have devastating consequences for father and son.

Last Ride is an unforgettable love story between parent and child.

The Story

Producer Nick Cole first read the manuscript for the novel in early 2002 and optioned it later that year. The novel, which was written by Denise Young, was published by Harper Collins in 2004 and went on to win a Varuna Award and a NSW Premier's Literary Award. Nick Cole's attraction to the characters was instant, 'I was immediately beguiled by Chook, the young ten year old boy and moved by the very adult choice he was confronted with. That is, the choice between doing what he knows to be right and the love of his father.'

Cole continues, 'as a novel, 'The Last Ride' had two very appealing qualities that I believed lent it to being adapted to the screen. First, a simple storyline with a driving plot. Second, there was a complex moral dilemma that challenged the two main characters.' Producer Antonia Barnard adds, 'the importance of 'Last Ride' in terms of relationships and familial issues is tremendous'.

Mac Gudgeon adapted the book and turned it into a very different story for the screenplay. He essentially stripped the book right back and took the main characters and their predicament as a single vision. 'The essence and the tone of the book is still there, it's still a hauntingly beautiful but brutal story seen through the eyes of a 10 year old boy' Glendyn says. 'But the book ends about half way through the film. Mac wondered what would happen if Kev and Chook kept running. In this way we viewed the book almost like the real life story of Chook and Kev. And the screenplay was the re-imagining of the truth. The book became a really important and detailed backstory for all the characters in the film.

Director Glendyn Ivin's interest in the project upon reading the script was immediate. He says, 'I knew ten pages into the script that I was going to make the film. It spoke directly to me, like it was a film about and for me. It was like a gift. There was something very familiar about the characters and their world, even though it was different to my own experience. I knew that it if rang true for me, that it would probably resonate with others. It's a universal story in the way it talks about parents and children.'

Producers Nick Cole and Antonia Barnard had discussed working together on a second project (they had previously worked together developing the feature film *Bad Angels*). Antonia says, 'I came on board *Last Ride* at about the 2nd draft of the script, and was involved in the process of working with Nick and screenwriter Mac Gudgeon on the draft we could send to directors.'

The father-son bond in the film was something Glendyn wanted to explore, 'I read the script just after I had become a father for the first time. I was very much assessing my own troubled relationship with my father, and how his inadequacies (brought about mainly through his own experience of having bad parents) could easily be passed onto my own son. In this way I could see the story very much from Chook's perspective, but also interestingly from Kev's. I wanted the film to explore the question: can the cycle of bad parents producing bad parents be broken?'

The Process

Last Ride is Glendyn Ivin's feature film directorial debut. Despite this, producer Antonia Barnard realized he was experienced enough to take on the role of director. Antonia says, 'working with Glendyn was a real joy, and I would welcome the opportunity to do it again. Whilst he was a debut feature film director, he has extensive experience with film, and has an extraordinary cinematic approach.'

Ivin, who won the Palme d'Or for Best Short Film at the 2003 Cannes Film Festival for the drama 'Cracker Bag,' was able to bring his usual creative team on board for. Producer Antonia Barnard says, 'because we were able to keep Glendyn's key creative people around him— like cinematographer Greig Fraser, production designer Jo Ford, editor Jack Hutchings and sound designer Craig Conway, he was always fully supported creatively.'

'I felt very comfortable going into the production as I was surrounded my friends, who I had been collaborating with for the past ten years, on shorts, commercials and music clips." says Glendyn. 'We have always tried to keep things small and intimate and found budget or production limitations to be strengths as it always makes you more creative and inventive. In this way I rarely use much film equipment and try and get away with the least amount of lighting as possible. You can be far more flexible when free of gear and extraneous people. It's so much more exciting to have just the essentials.' He adds, 'we have a very close working relationship. We know how each other thinks, each other's strengths and weaknesses and we support each other. In this way it's very much a team effort.'

'Knowing each other well allows us to keep things very loose and flexible while filming. We prepare and plan extensively, but ultimately for me the most important thing is what's happening on the day, in the moment. In this way we followed the script very carefully, but I always welcomed and kept my eyes and intuition open to possibilities and surprises. In this way we tried to keep the story alive.'

Over the 6-week shoot, the cast and crew of 25 travelled nearly 6000kms through some very remote and rugged country. 'This was a huge strain on the budget and the production in general,' says Antonia, 'but Glendyn was determined from the beginning that if we were making a 'road movie' we should all experience the journey ourselves. You absolutely see and feel the landscape change throughout the film.'

Antonia adds, 'travelling with such a small number of people through quite difficult terrain is an endeavour in and of itself, but somehow we managed to turn it all into one of those life experiences you are glad to participate in. Glendyn is a very collaborative director and the crew were dedicated to him, so for me, with all the films I have been involved with, this one stands out.'

Locations

Originally the book and subsequently the script were set in Broken Hill and its surroundings. Screenwriter Mac Gudgeon and director Glendyn Ivin undertook the same trip as in the novel, camping along the routes set in the book. Unsure whether Broken Hill contained all of the locations required for the shoot, producer Antonia Barnard believed South Australia could hold the answer to their location needs, 'eventually, when the Adelaide Film Festival became involved, and after I had seen 'Lucky Miles', I thought that the Flinders Ranges may contain all the locations we were looking for. The SAFC brought us down to look around, and Glendyn was immediately taken with a location about 20 minutes into our four-hour drive. From then on there was no doubt but that the Flinders Ranges would be the location for our film.'

Director Glendyn Ivin says, 'the locations in the film are all special in their own way. In the early stages of pre-production, we went on two quite extensive location scouting of South Australia. I had already looked in Queensland, and we had been to Broken Hill and beyond on a writing trip, but

everything I saw in South Australia just blew me away so we adapted the film to work around this new terrain, a little like how you might develop and re-write characters after rehearsal, I would go out and find locations and then come back and work them into the script with Mac. In this way the script remained quite open and organic right to the very end.'

Ivin continues, 'In some areas we trekked into I'd ask how many other films had been shot there because these spots were so amazing I was sure ten other films would have already used it. When I found out that no one had ever been there with a camera, I was blown away; all these incredible locations just waiting to have stories brought to them. It was one of the most inspiring stages of the production for me, as it really helped shape the script in a very physical way.'

Communicating from the Flinders Ranges

In July 2008, communications in the Flinders Ranges were limited and internet connections, vital to production, were difficult and expensive. A chance meeting in a pub between DOP Greig Fraser and a Telstra representative, Michelle Bourke led to the offer of the opportunity for the production to test new mobile broadband devices. Because the production was on the road for almost six weeks in a communications wasteland, the offer of testing the devices was opportune. Not only did it allow the production office to work in any location such as the back of a car, top of a hill, hotel room, or a lakeside, it also allowed two crucial things:

1. Because of the distant location, the daily rushes had a five day turnaround. With the technology now available, Greig was able to take photos on set, send them to the lab and get them to grade the daily rushes to match the colour in the photo. The lab would then send back their grade and the two photos could be compared.
2. On several occasions, the editor needed small additional shots for a variety of scenes. Glendyn was able to stay connected and use the camera on his computer to show the editor potential alternative locations whilst driving past them. Because the production moved every two or three days it was impossible for us to get back to any location, so the 'on the road' location substitution was invaluable.

Casting

When it came to casting, Hugo Weaving's name had continually come up as an actor who had the intelligence and raw energy to play the character of Kev. Antonia Barnard says, 'working with Hugo was what I had always wanted to do since working with him many years ago on 'Bodyline'. He loved the script and brought an enormous amount to the role of Kev. Tom Russell, a newcomer, brought a different element to the script, but the combination of the two of them together has made the film very accessible to audiences, even though it is quite a confronting piece. They have added to the script far more than Nick and I could ever have imagined when we started out with this story. It was also a great experience working with Anita Hegh, whose work I knew, but I had never worked with her. The depth she brought to the difficult role of Maryanne was just what the script called for.'

Director Glendyn Ivin found that he immediately bonded with actor Hugo Weaving, 'When Hugo said yes to the script and we met up, we had a three or four hour lunch, and I don't think that we talked about the film at all. We knew Hugo could play this role but more importantly to me, Hugo was someone who was just really easy to hang out with, and we had a really similar emotional response to stories and characters in films, so we were on the same wave length - that was probably more important than anything. I felt that if we were able to communicate, then ninety percent of the job was done.

Glendyn found working with Hugo an incredible learning experience. 'In rehearsal, I sat down next to Hugo and we meticulously went through the script line by line, word by word, looking at what his character Kev did, and worked out the reason why he did it, what it meant, what Kev knew, what the audience knows and what other characters know. I'd never worked that way, so Hugo taught me a lot about how to find a character, and in particular how to pitch a character over an hour and a half, or two hour story. That for me was invaluable.'

Ivin continues, 'I think Hugo really took the opportunity to create an amazing character out of Kev. He made him a really rounded, human character when it would have been so easy for Kev to be this deadbeat character that you don't like. Hugo almost obsessively went to work on creating Kev - a character who is incredibly complex. At the beginning of the film the audience despises him as a character, but by the end they love him, and I think that's actually Hugo weaving his magic there. It's a very powerful and moving performance, and I hope it becomes one of his defining roles.'

Glendyn undertook extensive character research, interviewing real people in order to assist shaping the character of Kev on screen. 'I love research and I really wanted to find some real 'Kevs' to interview and give to Hugo as inspiration for his character. I did this mostly to find the way Kev might speak and as an overall reference – from how he might sit and hold a cigarette, to the way he would hold a beer, to the way he might walk and talk. As well, some of the interviewers' own experiences and dialogue also crept their way into the film.'

Ivin continues, 'during rehearsals Hugo listened to their voices on a Dictaphone again and again. I found that fascinating, like he really valued a real world approach to research and finding out who Kev was.'

Once Hugo was cast as Kev, the process of casting the character Chook was undertaken. Director Glendyn Ivin had never intended on holding a 'cattle call' audition for the character of Chook because he had a clear idea of what he was looking for in a young actor. 'I was open to what Chook looked like but was specifically after a young actor who was resilient with a confidence and a naturalness – a regular kid. I saw Tom at an audition one afternoon in Adelaide, and he was really impressive. The next morning we organized to see him at home, and even though I was a stranger, he was just a really nice kid to be around, so that was really important.

Ivin continues, 'at one point, he picked up a guitar and launched into this song, singing his heart out. Not only was it a really good performance, but there was one point where he screwed it up, and didn't know the words but he didn't get embarrassed by it at all. He just said "I don't know these words" and then just launched back into the bit he knew. I'd never seen someone who was that relaxed about performing. I just felt that, that was who I wanted to play Chook. I didn't want a kid who was going to be too hard on himself, but felt comfortable just being who he was. Tom never seemed to be overwhelmed by the process, people and characters, cameras, equipment and lights, and he was just great on-screen and off-screen. He surprised me and everyone on the crew on a daily basis.'

Producer Nick Cole sees 'The Last Ride' as falling within an Australian mythology and storytelling tradition involving journeys through the landscape and displaced people. Cole says The Last Ride 'reminded me of D'Arcy Niland's book, "The Shiralee" which was originally published in 1955. *Last Ride* felt like it was a 21st century version of Niland's classic. It connected me to paintings by McCubbin, Rees, Boyd, Whiteley and Hans Heysen - all depicting aspects of life on the road or the Australian landscape dissected by roads. Even "Waltzing Matilda" tells the story of a swagman on the road.'

Antonia Barnard added, 'we have always intended for this film to be an international Australian film. It is, by its very nature Australian, but the story could have worked in any country.'

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On Set With Hugo, Tom and Mr Right

By Denise Young, author of the novel *The Last Ride* (published by Harper Collins)

It's no limo that delivers me to Quorn in outback South Australia to visit the set of the movie 'The Last Ride,' based on a book with the same title that I wrote. I've got butterflies in my stomach and deep misgivings as I putter up in the gutless pram with an engine that I hired in Adelaide, through the flatness of Spencer Gulf country towards Port Augusta: misgivings about what I'm doing there and how I'll be treated. After all, I've seen 'Adaptation', where the writer Charlie Kaufman is evicted from the set of 'Being John Malkovich' for getting in the cameraman's eye line. Mac Gudgeon, the scriptwriter who turned my book into the movie currently being shot, told me writers were about as much use on set as spare prickles on a honeymoon.

There's a bigger question as well. 'The Last Ride' is my baby. Strangers are about to turn my baby into another kind of beast altogether. Will I like or hate what I see?

Everything seems good on paper. Mac showed me the first two drafts of the film script, even though he wasn't obliged to under the terms of the contract in which I'd sold the option, and he encouraged my feedback. I felt that he'd stayed true to the spirit of the book and, above all, that he loved my two main characters, father and son, Kev and Chook, as much as I did. Indeed I thought that as a man he'd found some other more masculine elements in that relationship. However, I haven't seen the final shooting script and don't even know how it ends. The endings that Mac has come up with in the drafts I've seen so far are more dramatic than the one I chose in the book, but I'm prepared to take on trust whatever they arrive at, knowing that film demands a more dramatic climax than literature.

The director, Glendyn Ivin, and the director of photography, Greig Fraser, are both highly regarded. Producers Nick Cole and Antonia Barnard have steered the film through all the hoops and hoopla with love and terrier-like intensity, snapping at the heels of funding bodies till they got the money to make it.

Nick bought the option to turn my novel into a film six years earlier, before it was published. He'd seen the manuscript courtesy of our shared agent. The option ran initially for three years, then was renewed for another three. During that six years, Nick moved steadily through the various stages required to get a film funded.

First of all, he engaged the Melbourne scriptwriter Mac Gudgeon, author of many TV scripts and the film 'The Delinquents', and Film Victoria, which then funded various drafts of the script. Another producer came on board, the very experienced Antonia Barnard, of whose recent productions one was 'The Painted Veil'.

Then an up and coming director, Glendyn Ivin, who won a prize at Cannes in 2003 for his short film 'Cracker Bag' and was looking at various ideas for his first feature film, became attached to this project. He told me later that what drew him to it was its exploration of the father/son relationship.

Finally, internationally and locally acclaimed actor Hugo Weaving committed. Films need all these alignments of enthusiasm from big and well-respected names to attract funding from government and private investors if they're to have a show of attracting even the minimal budgets they need. This film's budget is \$4 million.

I checked my stars that morning: Taureans were promised a great day, with exciting events about to unfold. There was a hitch the night before which perhaps signaled a bad omen, however. I was staying at a friend's government flat in Port Augusta when we managed to lock ourselves out at 11.30pm on a freezing winter's night in our pajamas without money or phone, while going to check on something I'd left in the car. The only place open in town was McDonald's. Its car park was a bleak place, the icy wind whipping round our pajama-clad legs while we tried to persuade the two

astonished kids on duty at the takeaway window to lend us a phone and let us ring the only locksmith in town, who eventually woke up, got out of bed and came round to let us in around 12:30 am.

I didn't get a lot of sleep with all that going on and know I'm not looking my best when I hiccup into Quorn looking for Fifth Street. It isn't hard to find. They go in order, in the tiny and very attractive town, with broad streets, old stone houses and an ancient steam train that run on the weekends through the Pichi Richi cut. I see that Fifth Street is blocked off with tape to stop cars entering, and there are the usual large vans and film people bustling purposefully about. There's a crowd of neighbors hovering, waiting for excitement to strike.

Somebody with an armful of costumes is getting out of one of the ubiquitous four wheel drives that power and transport a film's cast and crew when I pull up, so I nervously introduce myself. Her reaction is reassuring: 'Oh how wonderful to meet you. I loved your book!!!' The producers have been kind enough to order a dozen copies of my book for cast and crew to read while they were hanging round on set.

It's remarkable how many people have read it and come up to talk to me about the book. I'm not silly enough to believe they all loved it, but at least the presence of the book on set gives credibility and respect to the work on which the movie is based.

I spot Hugo Weaving, who is playing the main character, Kev. He comes straight up to tell me that he also loves my book and relishes playing the character of Kev, a violent man, but one who in his own way loves his ten year old son, Chook, and is trying to do the best he can, according to his not-very-bright lights. Hugo's passion and commitment to the project shine out and, no matter what the result, I know instantly that there is deep integrity as well as talent at work here.

Tom Russell, the boy playing Chook, is a great choice. He looks wonderful and his acting is instinctive and 'in the moment'. He and Hugo already seem to share an easy rapport, which is important as the film depends for its impact on the relationship between these two, who are almost never off-screen. And Tom adores the Jack Russell, Mr Right, introduced into the film as Kev's girlfriend Maryanne's pet dog. This feels freaky because I had no Jack Russell in my book, but have just lost a much loved one as a pet.

The whole crew seems to share Hugo's passion for the project. I'm told again and again how beautiful this film is going to be. 'Think Wim Wenders with an Australian accent', they assure me. Even allowing for the hype and enthusiasm that comes from a shared endeavor, this is heady stuff.

There is one slight hitch: they're not actually shooting any scenes from my book while I'm there. All the scenes being shot during my two days on set are new ones from Mac Gudgeon's script. In my book the old girlfriend that Kev hopes will give them shelter is not home when the pair turn up on the run after a crime committed by Kev. They sleep on a park bench in Broken Hill, now translated to Quorn. In the movie script, the park bench has become Quorn Cemetery. I've missed the dawn shoot where the two wake up and steal flowers from graves to take back to Maryanne's house, in the hope that if she's home the flowers will sweeten things between her and Kev.

I arrive in time to see the two forlorn figures, carrying cheap luggage and limp sleeping bags, turn up on Maryanne's front porch and present her with the flowers. The house's real owner, Tim, is ever present on set. In the movie, Maryanne is living with a home renovator and Tim's house was chosen because it was in a partially renovated state. Unfortunately, before the shoot started Tim was unable to resist doing a bit more work and the producers have had to beg him to leave the kitchen unrenovated.

Kev and Maryanne end up in bed, again a scene not in my book, but one that you might expect on film, leaving Chook playing with Mr Right and peeping in the bedroom window. Despite the brief

physical connection, Maryanne is not prepared to shelter the two and they're soon on their way, though not before Kev steals some money from her wallet, watched by the dog Mr Right.

Over dinner that night the director shares with me via his laptop some stills already shot and some locations coming up. They reveal a dark, moody intensity and a landscape whose vast emptiness mirrors the moral and emotional emptiness within Kev. The landscape looks as if it will truly be a character in the movie, with the inspiring red terrain of the Flinders Ranges a particular highlight. Though I set my book around Broken Hill I can see that the locations the producers and director have chosen are more than its equal.

One new element introduced into the shooting script comes from Glendyn's life, he tells me. It's a memory from his Melbourne childhood of seeing a neighbour killing, skinning and butchering a sheep in his backyard. He has Chook watching from the car window as his father's friend, Max, does just this. This moment of horror mirrors some of the horrors he has already witnessed in his young life. As well, instead of Max coming from yet another Australian farmhouse, as he does in my book, Glendyn has found a perfect post industrial, semi-rural place for him to live and work in a car wrecking yard. This fits perfectly with the harsh events that unfold there and gives a quite different visual interest. I like these changes. They make visual metaphors where the book has to rely on words.

Glendyn also tells me of an upcoming scene to be shot on a huge salt lake in SA, Lake Gairdner, where father and son quarrel in the car and Kev puts the boy out and drives off. The image of the small boy plodding across the vast lake sends shivers up my spine. That is the stuff film can do that no amount of written description can achieve.

The crew of around 45 people (small by international film standards) are currently shooting Week 2 of a six week schedule. They still have large parts of outback South Australia to traverse from Woomera to the Flinders and back to Adelaide. It is, Antonia confides later, a very tiring shoot, with such an intense emphasis on two main characters, including a child actor who cannot be worked as hard as an adult and locations throughout the outback that are universally freezing.

They wake up to mornings with ice on the windscreens of the cars, and so on. Film shoots must be the most cohesive, collaborative and intense periods, with so many people working away from home at such close quarters. They are the polar opposite of working alone as a writer, when, in the privacy of your study/bedroom/attic/coffee shop—if you're JK Rowling, you create characters which, one day, if you're lucky, someone will want to bring to life and animate through the skill of the scriptwriter, actors, director, camera, sound, set building, costume and make-up people. Of course, this is fraught with dangers and difficulties for the reader as well as the writer, who may not see the characters in the way they are interpreted on film.

Indeed, that is the question people are most interested in asking me: How does it feel to see my baby being interpreted by all these other people? The answer is that it feels thrilling. I am fortunate to have an excellent cast and crew, but I've always understood that film is another animal entirely. The baby that was and is my book has been out in the world for nearly four years. I no longer feel possessive of it. It has its own life and that life can't be touched by the movie, which has its own life and being.

The way I see Kev and Chook, they may not look exactly like Hugo and Tom and there is no Mr Right in my book. But the movie is Glendyn's and Mac's and Hugo's and Tom's and Greig's and Antonia's and Nicholas's and everybody else's baby now. It's a communal expression that I can't wait to see when it comes out later next year. Whatever happens, I will treasure my two days with people passionate about their work, and equally passionate about mine.

- Denise Young

CAST

HUGO WEAVING – ‘KEV’

Hugo Weaving is one of Australia’s most critically acclaimed film and stage actors. A graduate of the National Institute for Dramatic Art (NIDA) he has received multiple awards and nominations for his performance as a blind photographer in Jocelyn Moorhouse’s breakthrough feature *Proof*, and as drag queen Mitzi Del Bra in Stephan Elliott’s *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. He has worked with the Wachowski siblings in the Matrix trilogy (as Agent Smith), and with Peter Jackson in the *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (as Elrond) and the upcoming *Hobbits* films. A stage veteran with a long association with the Sydney Theatre Company, he appeared with Cate Blanchett in the Company’s production of *Hedda Gabler* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Hugo’s recent credits include *Wolf Man* alongside Anthony Hopkins and Benicio Del Toro, *The Key Man*, the voice of *Megatron* in the blockbuster hit *Transformers* and *The Tender Hook* alongside Rose Byrne.

TOM RUSSELL – ‘CHOOK’

Child actor Tom Russell’ first professional role was as a Gumnut in Windmill Performing Arts’ *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie* in March 2007. Since then he has starred in the short film *Daniel*, Julie Bertuccelli’s *The Tree*, and *Matching Jack* directed by Nadia Tass, and appeared on stage in the role of Gavroche in the Gilbert & Sullivan of SA’s award winning production of *Les Miserables*. Tom is also a featured soloist in Pelican Productions’ Music Theatre Camps and a member of the acrobatic troupe CircoBats.

ANITA HEGH – ‘MARYANNE’

Since graduating from NIDA in 1994, Anita Hegh has performed with most of Australia’s leading theatre companies including The Melbourne Theatre Company, The Bell Shakespeare Company, Belvoir Street, The Sydney Theatre Company and The Queensland Theatre Company.

In addition to her stage work, Anita Hegh’s television credits include *Wildside*, *Water Rats*, *Last Man Standing*, *Holly’s Heroes*, *McLeod’s Daughters*, *Valentine’s Day*, *Loot*, *The Informant* and *Stingers* series 1 – 5 as ‘Mac’. In 2005 Hegh won the AFI Award for Best Supporting Actress in Television for her role as De Julia Delvecchio in *MDA* and was also nominated for best female actor in the Green Room Awards for her one-woman show *The Yellow Wallpaper*.

JOHN BRUMPTON – ‘MAX’

John Brumpton extensive work in award winning feature and television dramas includes roles in *Dance Me To My Song*, *Gettin’ Square*, *Tom White*, *Life*, *Angel Baby*, *Only the Brave*, *Romper Stomper*, *City Homicide*, *All Saints*, *East West 101*. Prior to *LAST RIDE* John also appeared in the features *Long Weekend*, *Storm Warning* and the AFI nominated *Life*.

SONYA SUARES – ‘DR.KHAN’

Sonya Suarez trained at the WA Academy of Performing Arts and has worked across the spectrum of dramatic arts in film, television, theatre, opera and music theatre. She is passionate about work with a social conscience and has performed with Actors for Refugees, Positive Women and Project Respect. Suarez’ screen credits include the feature films *Wil*, *Stranded*, *My Year Without Sex* and *Knowing* and television appearances include *Ocean Girl*, *Wicked Science*, *Rush*, *Very Small Business* and *East West 101*.

KELTON PELL – ‘RANGER’

Kelton Pell has had an illustrious theatre career for over twenty years performing in companies including Deck Chair Theatre, Black Swan Theatre, South Australian Theatre Company and the Yirra Yaakin Noongar Theatre where he wrote and starred in a production of *Solid*, a hit of the Perth and Brisbane International Arts Festival 2000. Pell was awarded the WA Aboriginal Artist of the Year

Award, the Swan Gold Award for Best West Australian Actor and the Contemporary Performing Arts Award for Best Collaboration. Pell has also appeared in films including *Blackfellas*, *Australian Rules*, *To Hell and Back*, *September* and *LAST RIDE* and on television series *Bush Patrol*, *Headhunters*, *Where Two Rivers Meet*, *Dirt Game* and was most recently in the highly acclaimed SBS television series *The Circuit*.

CREW

GLENDYN IVIN – DIRECTOR

A graduate of The Victorian College of the Arts, School of Film and TV, Glendyn Ivin's short film *Cracker Bag*, won the Palme d'Or for short film at the 2003 Cannes Film Festival. *Cracker Bag* was also nominated for four Australian Film Institute Awards (AFI), winning two for Best Short Screenplay and Best Short Film.

Since 2000, Glendyn has been a director at Exit Films, one of Australia's most successful commercial production companies where he has built a successful career as a commercial and music promo director. He has directed *Von Stauffenberg's Stamp* starring Sam Neill as part of the television series *Two Twisted* for Channel 9, and the short *The Desert* which was nominated for an AFI award.

Last Ride is Glendyn's feature film debut.

MAC GUDGEON – SCREENPLAY

With feature film credits including *Ground Zero* (written with Jan Sardi,) winner of four Australian Film Institute awards, *The Delinquents* (starring Kylie Minogue) and *Wind*, the Francis Ford Coppola/Zoetrope production, Mac Gudgeon is one of Australia's leading writers of film, television and theatre.

Gudgeon's television credits include *Waterfront*, the award-winning six part mini-series, *The Petrov Affair*, Australian Film Institute Award for best telemovie *The Feeding (Halifax F.P.)* and *Sweet Dreams (Halifax F.P.)* which won the 1996 Australian Writers' Guild award for best telemovie screenplay.

In 2007, Gudgeon was the inaugural recipient of the 'Foxtel Fellowship for Excellence in Television Writing' and is also a recipient of an Australian Film Commission 'Distinctly Australian Fellowship' for the feature film screenplay *Boyo*. He is currently co-writing a mini-series '*The Warrior & The Hangman*' with British writer Jimmy McGovern for the BBC.

GREIG FRASER - CINEMATOGRAPHER

Following a remarkable career as a stills photographer, Greig Fraser began working as a cinematographer with the highly acclaimed production company Exit Films where he worked for the first time with Glendyn Ivin on *Cracker* which earned Greig a nomination for Best Cinematography at the 2003 AFI Awards.

Fraser was 2nd unit Director of Photography for Baz Luhrmann's feature film *Australia* and has served as cinematographer on feature films including *Out of the Blue* (Robert Sarkies) Jane Campion's *Bright Star*, *The Boys are Back* starring Clive Owen, *Snow White and the Huntsman* starring Kristen Stewart and Charlize Theron and Kathryn Bigelow's latest feature about the Navy SEAL Team that tracked down Osama Bin Laden.

JACK HUTCHINGS – EDITOR

Jack Hutchings has been editing short films and television commercials for over a decade winning awards around the world including Gold and Titanium Lions at the Cannes Lions in Cannes, Gold MADC's in Australia, Silver Clio's in the US. A commercial for Boots Pharmacies, directed by Garth Davies, has been included in the permanent collect of film at MOMA.

Hutchings' work on *Cracker Bag* won him Best Editing in a Short Film at the AFI Awards. This acclaim was followed by another short, *Nature's Way* for director Jane Shearer (also selected to premiere at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival). *Nature's Way* won the Jury Prize at the 2007 Paris Film Festival and best short film at the New Zealand Film Awards. In April 2008 Jack had a third outing at Cannes with the short film *Jerrycan* (director Julius Avery,) which won the short film Jury Prize. *Last Ride* is Jack Hutchings' first feature film.

DENISE YOUNG - NOVELIST

Denise Young was born and educated in Sydney, graduating with an honours degree in English from Sydney University. After working as an actress and drama teacher, she began writing plays in the mid eighties, as well as creating theatre pieces with actors' companies and directing a youth theatre team.

In 2000 she turned to writing pros. Her first novel, *'The Last Ride'*, was published by HarperCollins in 2004. In 2003 the book had won the Jim Hamilton Award for Best Unpublished Novel, offered by the Fellowship of Australian Writers in Victoria and also went on to win the NSW Premier's Prize for a First Novel in 2005.

Denise is currently working on a novel set on the north coast of NSW about the tribulations of a young Vietnamese bride, pursued by her Australian husband's vengeful ex-wife and his adult children.

PAUL CHARLIER – COMPOSER

Paul Charlier has composed and produced the scores and sound designs for over one hundred and fifty performances, radio productions and films including DV8's *The Cost of Living*, Force Majeure's *Already Elsewhere* the Sydney Opera House and Malthouse Theatre's scores for *Honour Bound*, *Deuce* (Broadway, New York), *Copenhagen and Democracy* (Sydney/Melbourne), *Afterlife* (National Theatre, London), the New York season of the Sydney Theatre Company's *Hedda Gabler*, *Looking for Alibrandi* (AFI Best Film 2000), and the 2006 feature film *Candy* (Abbie Cornish and Heath Ledger).

Charlier's scores for the Sydney Theatre Company include *Victory*, *Love-Lies-Bleeding*, *Scenes from a Separation*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *Dissident*. For Belvoir Street Theatre, scores include *The Lieutenant off Inishmore*, *Buried Child*, *Toy Symphony*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, *Wasp*, *The Blind Giant is Dancing*, *Aftershocks* and *The Seagull*. Paul has been the Sound Designer for many of Neil Armfield's Belvoir productions since 1993, including *Waiting for Godot*, *The Underpants*, *My Zinc Bed*, *Hamlet* and *The Judas Kiss*.

He has written and directed radio features for ABC Radio including *A Plan for Eurydice* and *The Touring Machine* (co-commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles) and the documentary series *Automata: Machines Like Us* and *Film Without Music*. His radio short *The Last Chance of Johnny Zhivago* was selected for the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave – Down Under Festival 2001.

JO FORD – PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Jo Ford's career as a Production Designer in the Australian film industry has spanned more than thirty-five years.

She has designed many feature films including the classic Australian film *We of the Never Never* and New Zealand's *The Quiet Earth*. Jo has also worked on countless short films including Glendyn Ivin's *Cracker Bag*.

Over the past three decades Jo has been at the vanguard of television drama designing such productions as *My Brother Jack*, *After the Deluge*, and *The Road from Coorain*, for which she won the AFI Open Craft Award 2003. Jo has also designed several co-productions including the UK/Australian co-productions, *Kidnapped* and *Tripping Over*.

JODIE FRIED – COSTUME DESIGNER

Jodie Fried graduated from the NIDA design course in 1998 and since then has worked internationally in both theatre and film. Her credits include; *Romulus My Father* (directed by Richard Roxburgh, for which she received an AFI nomination for Best Costume Design); *Candy* (directed by Neil Armfield) and *Caterpillar Wish* (written and directed by Sandra Sciberras).

She was the production/costume designer for the short films *Love This Time* by Rhys Graham and *Spider* by Nash Edgerton. In 2004 she designed the costumes for the short *Jewboy* by Tony Krawitz (Un Certain Regard, Cannes Film Festival 2005), and was assistant costume designer on Rowan Woods' feature *Little Fish*. Her theatre costume credits include the Royal Shakespeare Company's adaptation of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, *Eternity Man* (Almeida Theatre, London), *Tense Dave & Arcade* for Chunky Move Dance Company, *12th Night Gulpillil*, *Aliwa*, *Threepenny Opera* and *Page 8* for Company B Belvoir.

ANTONIA BARNARD - PRODUCER

Antonia Barnard has been producing and line producing feature films and television since the mid-eighties, including award winning episodes of the Australian Children's Television Foundation's acclaimed series *Round the Twist*, *Two Bob Mermaid* (an award winning short film by indigenous director Darlene Johnson), *The Quiet American* with director Phillip Noyce, and producers Sydney Pollack, Anthony Minghella and William Horberg, and *The Painted Veil* starring Naomi Watts and Edward Norton.

NICHOLAS COLE – PRODUCER

After completing a law degree in 1987, Nick Cole began working in the feature film industry as an Assistant Director, Editor and Director. In 1992, Cole was chosen as one of eight writer/director's for the Post Graduate Diploma in Film at the Victorian College of the Arts. His graduation film *The Boatbuilder* was awarded the Cinevex Script Prize for Best Short Script.

Cole has also worked on films including *Paradise Road*, *Fearless*, *Strictly Ballroom*, *Green Card*, *Thank God He Met Lizzie* and *Death in Brunswick*. In 1995, his feature film script *Bad Angel* was nominated for an Australian Writers Guild Award. In 1996, he was one of four writers to be selected as part of the Australian Film Commission's inaugural *New Scriptwriters Scheme*.

In August 2002, Nick optioned the rights for Denise Young's novel *The Last Ride* and began developing the script with Mac Gudgeon.

CAST

Hugo Weaving
Tom Russell
Anita Hegh
John Brumpton
Sonya Soares
Kelton Pell

CREW

Director	Glendyn Ivin
Producer	Nicholas Cole Antonia Barnard
Screenplay	Mac Gudgeon
From the novel by	Denise Young
Executive Producer	Ricci Swart
Associate Producers	Mason Curtis Anthony Maras Jane Liscombe
Director of Photography	Greig Fraser
Production Designer	Jo Ford
Edited by	Jack Hutchings
Music Composed by	Paul Charlier
Costume Designer	Jodie Fried
Casting by	Fiona Dann, Chameleon Casting
Makeup Designer	Fiona Rees Jones
Sound Designer	Craig Conway

ABOUT MUSIC BOX FILMS

Founded in 2007, Music Box Films has quickly established itself as one of the leading distributors of non-English language feature films in the US in theatres, on DVD/Blu-ray and via Video-on-Demand. Music Box's release of Guillaume Canet's TELL NO ONE was the most popular foreign-language film of 2008 and in 2010, the film adaptations of Stieg Larsson's trilogy of international mega sellers dominated the foreign-language film market. The first in the series, THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO, with over \$10 million in US box office, was one the most popular international releases of the decade. 2012 releases include Terence Davies' THE DEEP BLUE SEA, starring Rachel Weisz, and Philippe Falardeau's MONSIEUR LAZHAR, 2012 Academy Award nominee for Best Foreign Language Film and one of the highest-grossing foreign films of the year. Recent acquisitions include Ira Sachs' KEEP THE LIGHTS ON, winner of the Teddy Award at the Berlin Film Festival, and LORE, directed by Cate Shortland (SOMERSAULT). Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates The Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premiere venue for independent and foreign films.