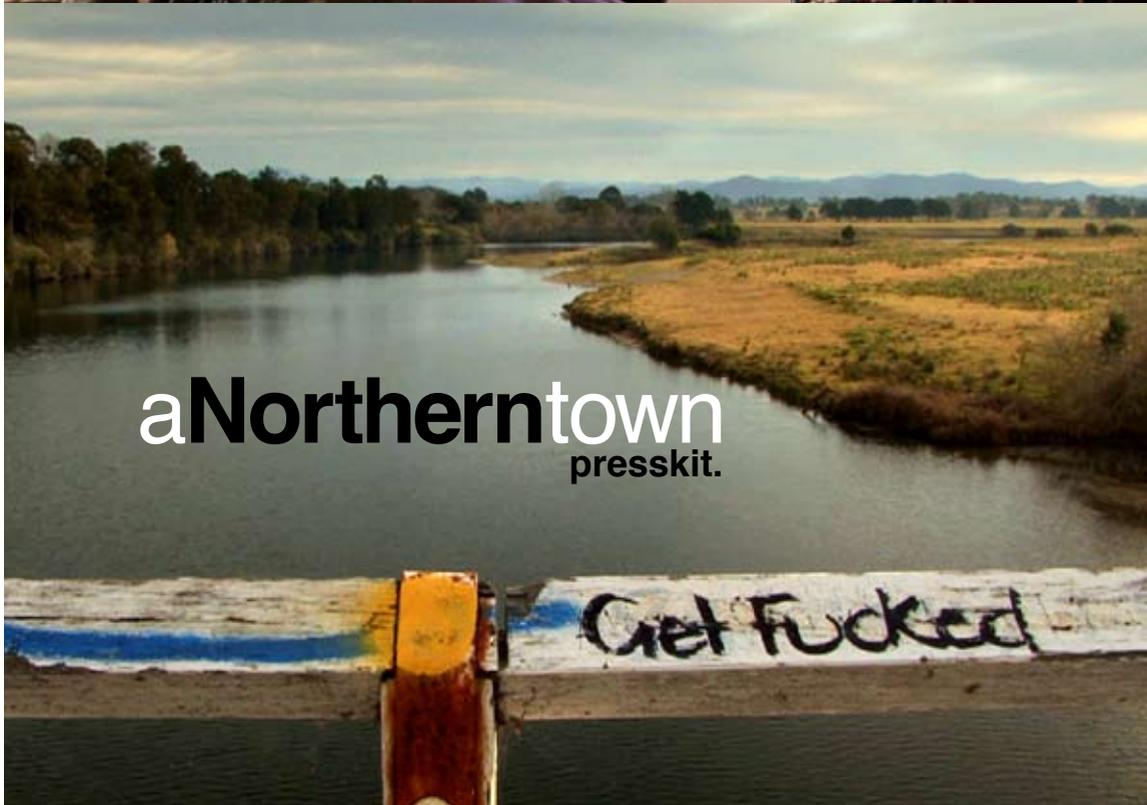


“The past is not dead and gone; it isn't even past.”

William Faulkner



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Production





Synopsis(Short).

The northern New South Wales town of Kempsey is a place haunted by the ghosts of its past. The people here, both black and white, have seen more than their fair share of tragedy and division through the years. As the white witnesses to this history have grown old, many have found themselves doing what they never could have imagined: moving in with black people. Yet, at the Aboriginal controlled Booroongen Djugun aged care facility, white people and Aboriginal people are living together... and they're talking. A Northern Town peels back more than 100 years of history as the residents of Booroongen - both black and white - relate tales that lay bare the truth of history and break the tragic divisions of the past.





“The past is not dead and gone; it isn't even past.”

William Faulkner

Synopsis (Long).

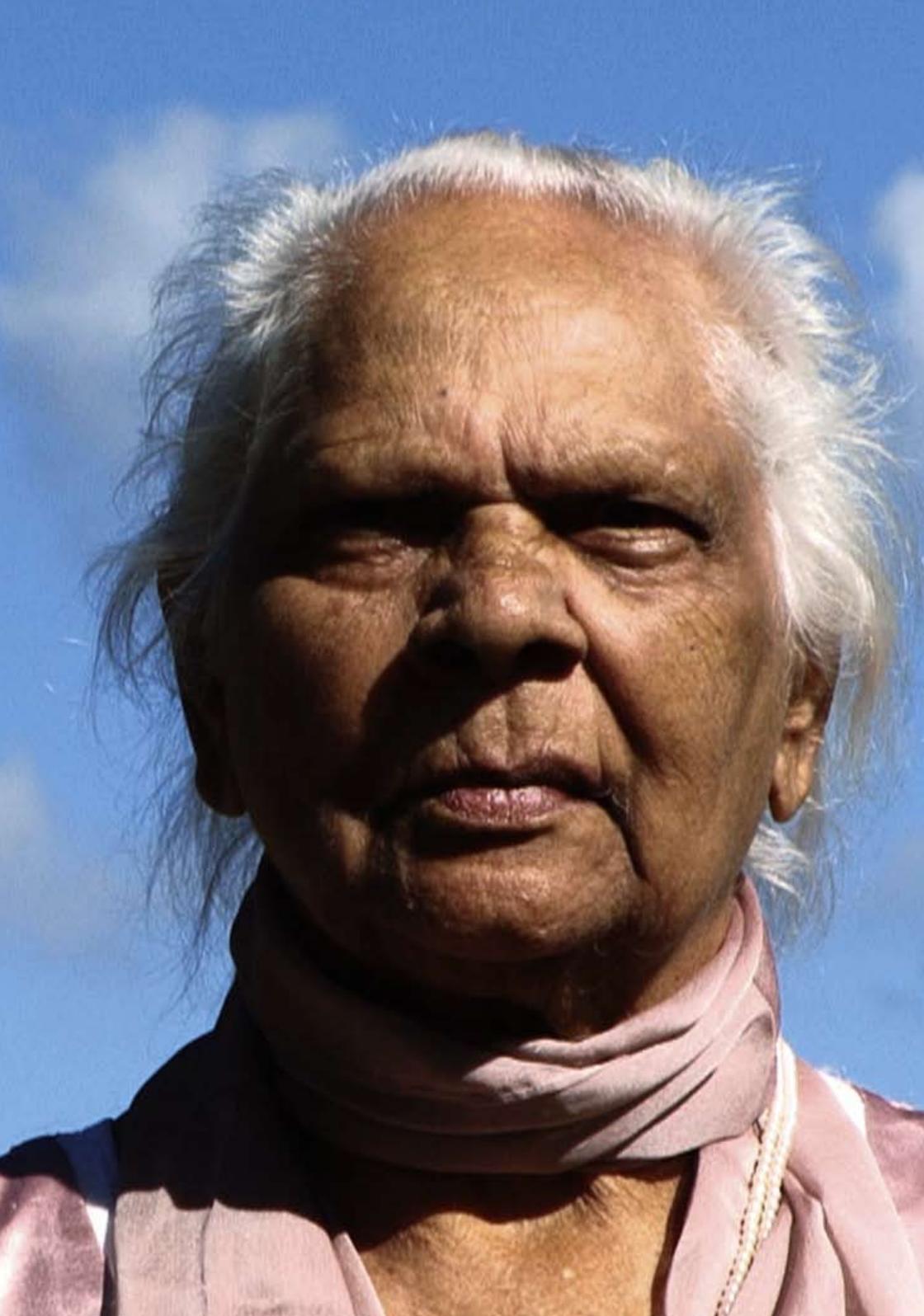
A Northern Town is an innovative and gripping journey into living history viewed through the prism of a radical indigenous owned and operated aged care facility [Booroongen] in the Australian country town of Kempsey – known as the ‘most racist town in Australia’. The residents of Booroongen are 50% Aboriginal and 50% White - old activists living with old racists. These people, with other citizens of Kempsey (white and black), tell the dark secrets of their schizophrenic past that bleeds into the present, revealing a shared history that is horrifying, tragic, comic, often inhuman, but buoyant in its telling. ***A Northern Town*** is the hidden history of Australia.

It is said that the past is another country. In Australia, looking at the past according to racial lines, it's more like a parallel universe. Kempsey, while extreme, is characteristic of 1000s of towns spread across the country. ***A Northern Town*** reveals a history of covered up massacres, Aboriginals herded onto missions, a segregated hospital, swimming pool and cinemas. Kempsey is also home to the notoriously brutal Kinchela Home for Aboriginal Boys and with almost a third of the overall population being indigenous, it's a white-hot ground zero of covert and overt racism on the one hand and third world poverty and oppression on the other. The long history of white suffering is revealed too, tales of men lost in wars, families torn apart by tragedy – madness, suicide, poverty – by cataclysmic floods that swept much of the town away.

When, in 1967, Australia held a national referendum on whether Aboriginal people should be included in the census – in effect asking if they should be recognized as citizens of Australia – it is Kempsey that returned the highest ‘no’ vote. Even today the past is keenly felt as this town remains divided. Aboriginals are only employed in Aboriginal organizations and you will not find a black face in any of the shops or private sector businesses downtown. There is a 17 year mortality gap between black and white. This is highest for any first world country. There remains a lot of ill will. These are the stories from both sides.

Featuring music from cult alt country performer Bill Callahan (Smog), Kempsey local and Aussie icon Slim Dusty, local musicians and one of Australia's hottest new composers Mr Benjamin Speed ***A Northern Town*** challenges conventional modes of documentary history – it's unique style makes one look at the past and present in new ways.

A Northern Town is a powerful documentary of shared humanity that presents a lucid, rich and timely mosaic of the past and present.



Bio(Director Rachel Landers).

Rachel Landers completed a PhD in history at the University of Sydney and a post-graduate directing course at the National Institute of Dramatic Art. Working in theatre after graduation she then moved into film as a writer and director of both drama and documentary. Her films have screened at numerous international festivals and have won and been nominated for a number of awards. *A Northern Town* is her first feature length documentary.

Filmography(Director Rachel Landers).

2008 *A Northern Town*
(75 mins Feature Documentary)

2006 *The Lost Tribe*
(56 mins Documentary)

2005 *A Debt of Honour*
(48 mins Documentary)

2004 *Missing*
(4 x 26 mins Documentary Series)

2003 *A Girl, A Horse, A Dream*
(52 mins Documentary)

2001 *Drama School*
(9 x 24 mins Documentary Series)

1999 *"Whiteys Like Us"*
(56 mins Documentary)

1998 *Revisionism*
(12 min Drama)



Bio (Producer Dylan Blowsen).

Dylan studied at the University of Massachusetts - Amherst, Harvard, and the International Film and Television Workshops in Maine before taking up production work at Paramount and Universal for four years. He then moved to New York to produce live television before moving to Sydney in 2002 when Dylan formed Pony Films with Rachel Landers to produce a large slate of successful, award-winning cutting-edge documentaries, including the recently completed film *A Northern Town*.

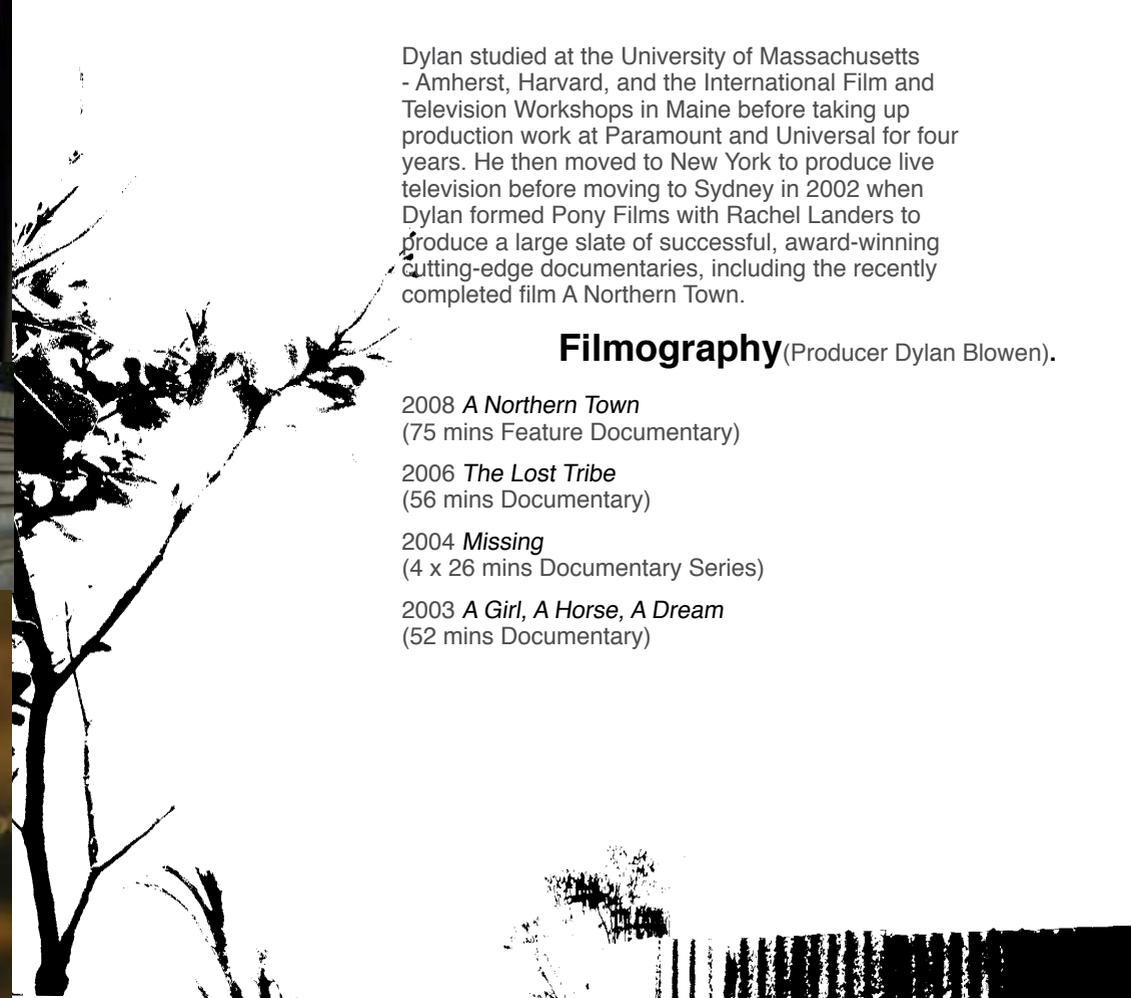
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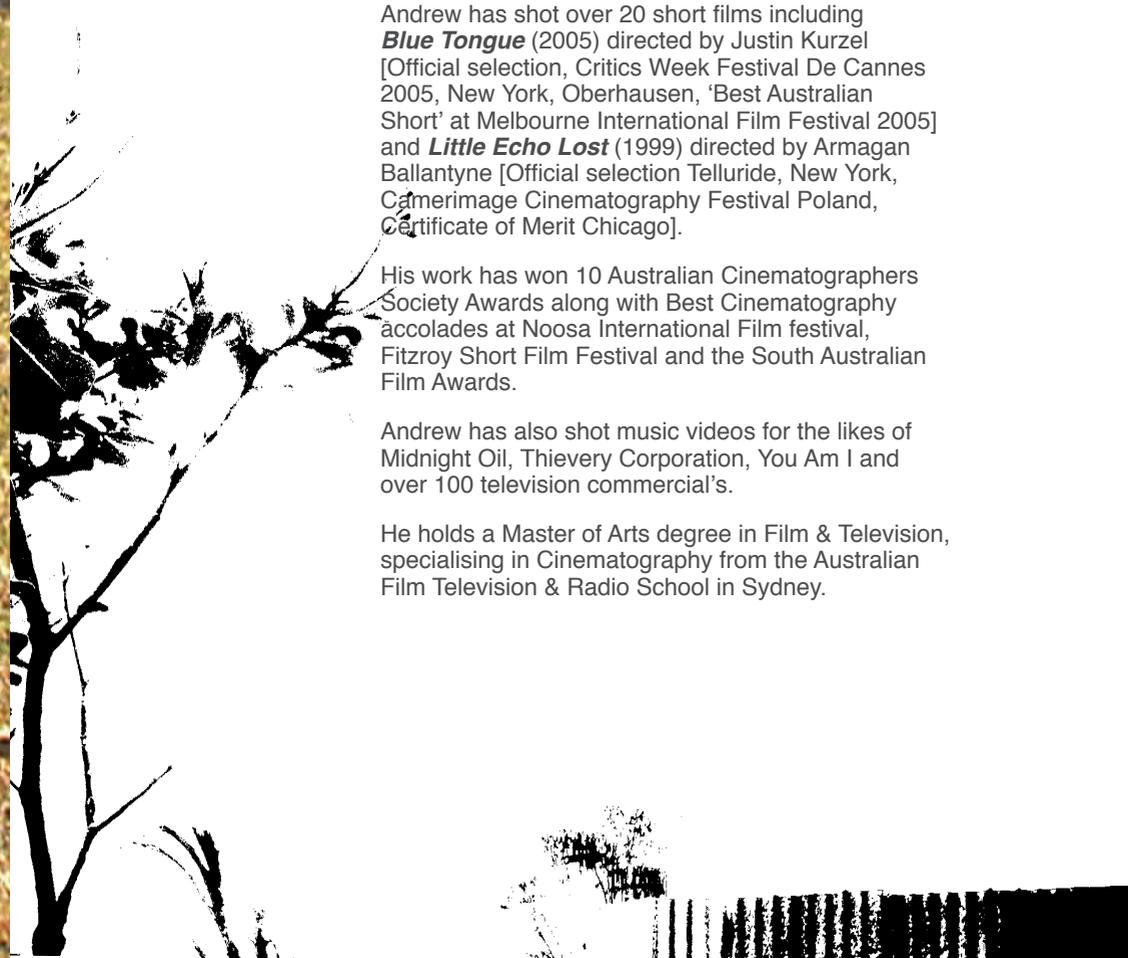
Bio(Cinematographer Andrew Commis).

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.

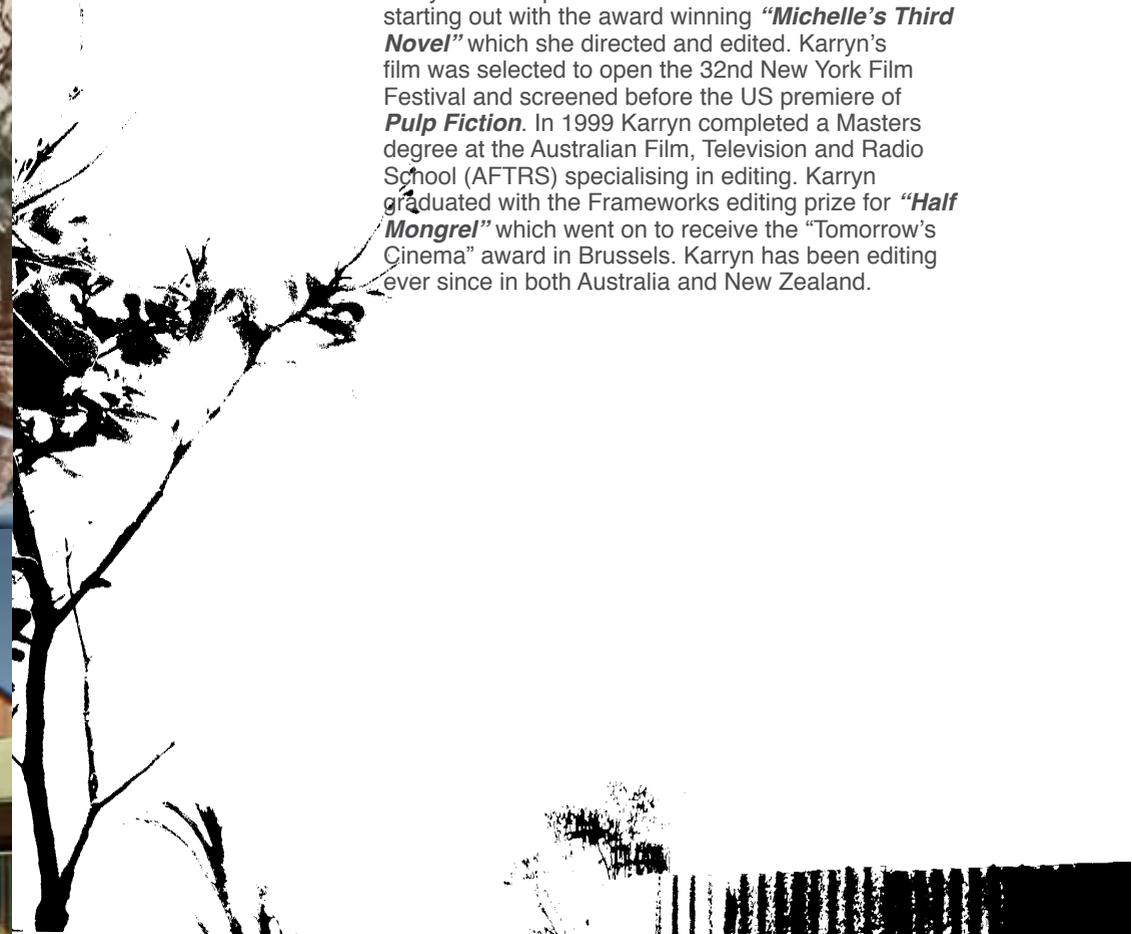
He holds a Master of Arts degree in Film & Television, specialising in Cinematography from the Australian Film Television & Radio School in Sydney.





Bio(Editor Karryn De Cinque).

Karryn De Cinque has edited over 20 short films: starting out with the award winning *“Michelle’s Third Novel”* which she directed and edited. Karryn’s film was selected to open the 32nd New York Film Festival and screened before the US premiere of *Pulp Fiction*. In 1999 Karryn completed a Masters degree at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS) specialising in editing. Karryn graduated with the Frameworks editing prize for *“Half Mongrel”* which went on to receive the “Tomorrow’s Cinema” award in Brussels. Karryn has been editing ever since in both Australia and New Zealand.





Technical Information (A Northern Town).

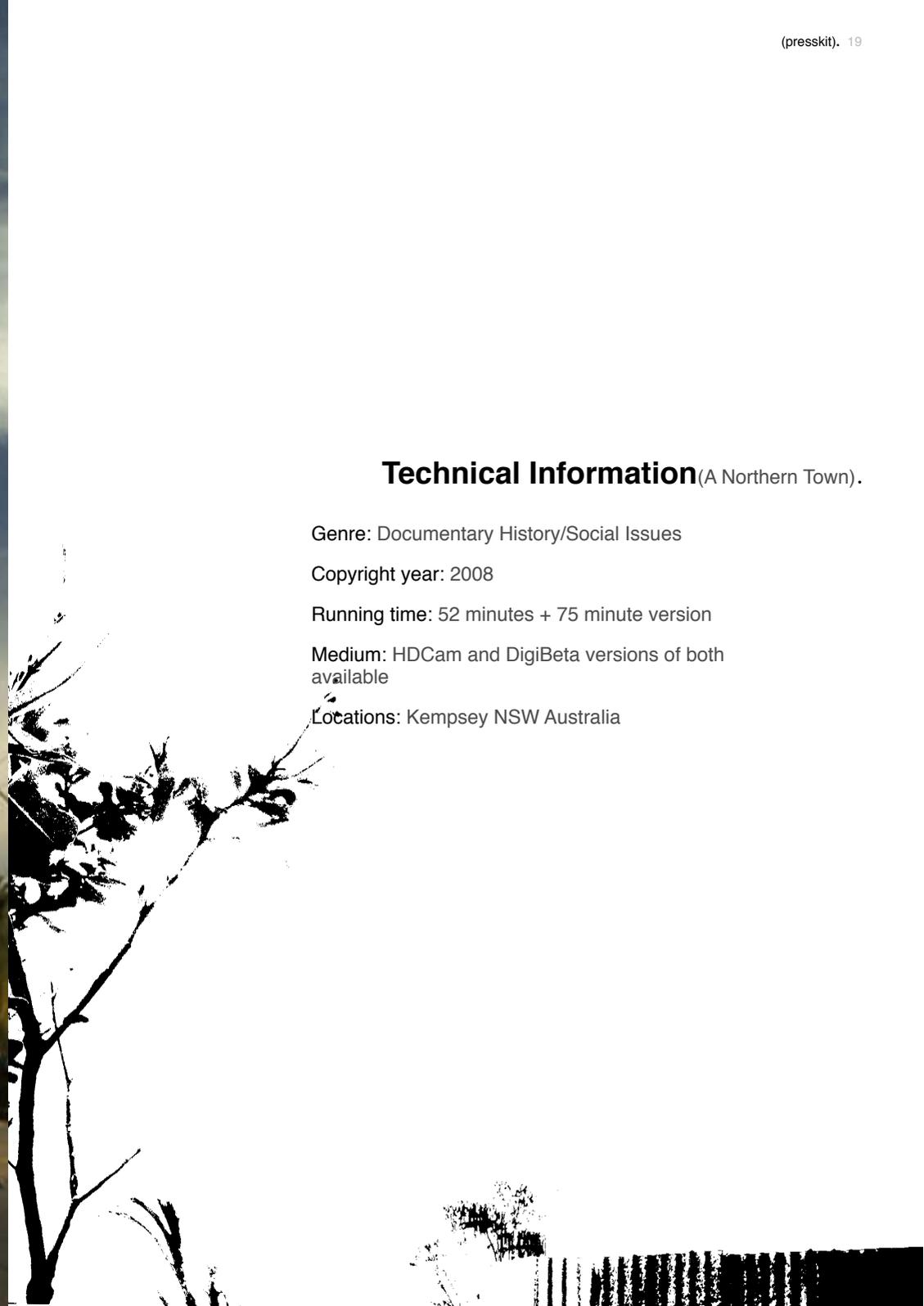
Genre: Documentary History/Social Issues

Copyright year: 2008

Running time: 52 minutes + 75 minute version

Medium: HDCam and DigiBeta versions of both available

Locations: Kempsey NSW Australia





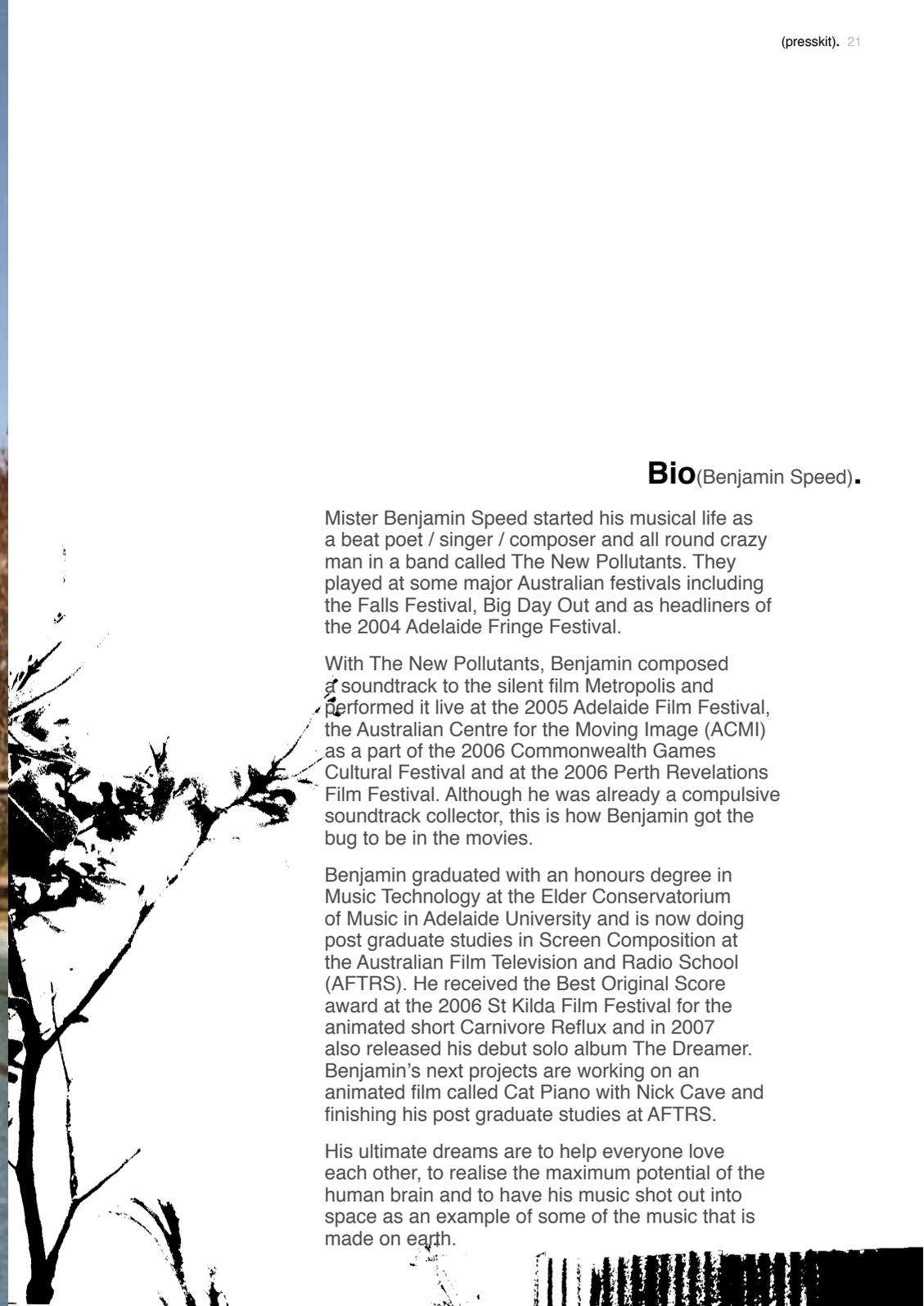
Bio(Benjamin Speed).

Mister Benjamin Speed started his musical life as a beat poet / singer / composer and all round crazy man in a band called The New Pollutants. They played at some major Australian festivals including the Falls Festival, Big Day Out and as headliners of the 2004 Adelaide Fringe Festival.

With The New Pollutants, Benjamin composed a soundtrack to the silent film Metropolis and performed it live at the 2005 Adelaide Film Festival, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) as a part of the 2006 Commonwealth Games Cultural Festival and at the 2006 Perth Revelations Film Festival. Although he was already a compulsive soundtrack collector, this is how Benjamin got the bug to be in the movies.

Benjamin graduated with an honours degree in Music Technology at the Elder Conservatorium of Music in Adelaide University and is now doing post graduate studies in Screen Composition at the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS). He received the Best Original Score award at the 2006 St Kilda Film Festival for the animated short Carnivore Reflux and in 2007 also released his debut solo album The Dreamer. Benjamin's next projects are working on an animated film called Cat Piano with Nick Cave and finishing his post graduate studies at AFTRS.

His ultimate dreams are to help everyone love each other, to realise the maximum potential of the human brain and to have his music shot out into space as an example of some of the music that is made on earth.





A Northern Town (Director's Statement).

My white family settled in Kempsey in the Macleay Valley in the early 1870s. As a child I would travel regularly to the town to visit my paternal grandparents. My vivid memories of the place were of a medium sized country town of pretty houses, home of Akubra hats, Slim Dusty, beef cattle and unremitting boredom punctuated by intoxicating holidays on the nearby coast.

A few years ago I met an Aboriginal man George Ellis, my age, whose father had been in the same year of high school as my father. His memories of the town, which we had occupied at exactly the same time, were the inverse of mine –the stuff of Dickensian nightmares. His father had been shipped to school from the notorious Kinchela Home for Aboriginal boys forcibly removed from their families. A place where children did forced labour, were raped and sometimes murdered. To him Kempsey was a place of 3rd world missions on the edge of town, whose surrounding countryside was littered with the bones of massacred Dunghutti. A town that had the highest No vote in the 1967 referendum asking whether Aboriginals should be counted as citizens. The town he described seemed to exist in a parallel universe. I literally couldn't summon up this town he described with a segregated swimming pool, hospital and cinemas. In fact I was hard pressed remembering actually meeting anyone black in this, one of Australia's country towns with the highest indigenous populations. Was I stupid? Mad? Racist? Given a whitewashed view of the town by my family?

I started to wonder that if George and my remembered histories are so startlingly divergent, then how did the contemporary inhabitants, both black and white, of this country town (replicated 100s of times across the continent) wear there past now? What did they remember, how do they articulate it? How did it infect their present? What were the critical incidents that shaped this town –how many versions of the 'truth' are there? The irony of having a PhD in history and a family history made up of fragments and ghosts is the inspiration that fuelled this documentary. For me, this was a journey to uncover, if not the definitive truth, then at least a new vista into which people like George and me could look back and see the same country.

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