

# Reflecting... After the Waterfall

*After the Waterfall* is the debut feature of award-winning writer/director Simone Horrocks (*Spindrift*) and director of photography Jac Fitzgerald. A raw and haunting tale of human resilience, the complex drama explores themes of trust and betrayal, unfinished business and family absences as John, a man who has lost everything, finds his way back to life. Based on the novel *The Paraffin Child*, Horrocks was drawn to the story's final message: 'sometimes a mystery remains a mystery and an absence an absence, which we have to deal with as best we can'.

"I always felt that *After the Waterfall* should be shot on film" says Horrocks, for whom faces were the most important feature. "I wanted to work with natural light, shoot in real locations and embrace the very changeable weather conditions in Piha and west Auckland - even within a scene. 16mm stocks are so good, they made it easy to work quickly on location."

## Naturalistic feeling

Fitzgerald takes up the story. "Simone and I had similar visions about the look, tone, and visual and emotional environment around the characters. We were keen to retain a naturalistic feeling that wouldn't complicate the already intense story. In terms of camera movement, we discussed how to move through the story visually, whilst retaining a realistic feel. We decided on three distinct chapters. Before John's little girl goes missing, the camera roams in a naturalistic handheld approach. After her disappearance, the camera slows down and the actors move around inside the frame, but we close in as John's world becomes more claustrophobic. We open up on him once more as his journey progresses. In terms of lighting, I

tried for a warmer feel at the start, before cooling off slightly as the story demanded, then I opened up lighting/grading wise" explains Fitzgerald, who shot with an ARRI on a monopod. "It was a tough shoot for Jac; fast and very physical, but she did a great job," states Horrocks.

The 26-day shoot took place in winter, in dramatically changing light and weather conditions. "It was meant to look like summer, but the day the leading man had to go bare-chested under the waterfall was near freezing!" recalls Fitzgerald. She used KODAK VISION2 50D 7201 for daylight exteriors, KODAK VISION3 250D 7207 for daylight interiors and low light forest exteriors, and KODAK VISION3 500T 7219 for night exteriors. "I love 16mm and the fine grain of 7201. The 7219 is a great stock and I had no problem putting the two up against each other."

## Keeping the magic

"It wasn't decided during the shoot whether we could do a DI, which was pretty scary. The weather changes were so dramatic; you could get a totally different look from one minute to the next. So I was over the moon when I heard we could!" says Fitzgerald. "Tracey Brown and Alison Ingram of Park Road Post Production in Wellington were great, and the talented senior colourist, Dave Hollingsworth, was fantastic at keeping the magic where it needed to be and smoothing out the overall look."



1

**"The weather changes were so dramatic; you could get a totally different look from one minute to the next."**

"The learning curve was immense, but exciting, and working closely with everyone was very satisfying. Like Simone, I was drawn to the storyline and how, although questions cannot always be answered, the human soul can heal itself."

"The level of commitment and talent amongst our cast and crew enabled us to transcend our constraints and achieve some very fine work. The film required those involved to dive deep and I'm grateful to everyone for taking that dive. I'd also like to thank producer Trevor Haysom,

and Marilyn Milgrom and the New Zealand Film Commission who took a big chance on me," concludes Horrocks.

*After the Waterfall* is produced by Paraffin Productions.

## Key Data at a glance

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Director</b>        | Simone Horrocks  |
| <b>Cinematographer</b> | Jac Fitzgerald   |
| <b>Format</b>          | 16mm   |
| <b>Film stocks</b>     | KODAK VISION2 50D 7201<br>KODAK VISION3 250D 7207 and<br>KODAK VISION3 500T 7219 |