

A man lies in a hospital bed, his eyes closed and mouth slightly open. His body is covered in thick, textured paint in shades of grey, blue, and red. In the lower half of his torso, a miniature scene is painted: a boat with two masts on a blue sea, a small figure of a man on a rock, and two fish at the bottom. The background is dark, with a white plastic sheet visible in the upper left corner.

THE TIDE KEEPER

"Who knows how to stem the tide,
except through dreams..."

Written, Directed and Produced By
Alyx Duncan

CONTACT

Alyx Duncan

80 Taylors Rd

Mt Albert 1025

Auckland

New Zealand

Phone: +64 21 11 981 00

Email: alyx@alyxduncan.com

Website: www.alyxduncan.com, www.theredhousefilm.com, www.thetidekeeper.com

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

RUNNING TIME: 9.12 Minutes

DATE OF COMPLETION: 10 June 2014

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: New Zealand

FUNDING SOURCES: Creative New Zealand, NZ Film Commission, Alyx Duncan

SCREENING FORMAT: DCP

ORIGINAL LANGUAGES: Silent dance film

SHORT SYNOPSIS

“Who knows how to stem the tide except through dreams?”

One night an old man dreams a storm into his bed. In the optimism of his youth, he believed he could save the world. But now, nearing the end of his life, he is losing hope he has run out of time to make a difference.

The film is inspired by the life, and performed by the filmmaker’s father.

LONG SYNOPSIS

An old man is collecting rubbish on a beach along the waters edge. He pauses to measure the incoming tide.

Title: The Tide Keeper

The man is in bed, asleep. He begins to dream.

Out of the darkness sails a small ship. It crests the sea green wave of the bed sheets, as the old man turns in his sleep. The ship continues its journey along the floor. Other vessels come into view.

A small airplane swoops down across the room, almost colliding with a larger sailing ship. The man is restless and turns in his sleep. The noise of the planes engine unsettles him. The small ship sails away beneath his bed.

Gradually and smoothly the green ocean sheets swell and tighten around the sleeping man. Their undulating motion takes him in their grasp, and his body twists. He is bound and his breathing and pulsing heart brews a storm.

The wind strengthens and blows the bedroom window open. A stack of papers is blown over, and some of his household possessions start to get caught in the storm. They sweep up onto the bed. In a gust of wind the big sailing ship plows through the waves of his green sheets only to get capsized as the dreaming man turns, jostled by the growing fury of the storm.

Ship ropes join the twisting mess of household objects and man on the bed. They creak as they tighten around his body. Seeing him from above the currents of wind and green sheets mix with his possessions to become an ocean garbage patch. As one last wave of household rubbish engulfs him he rolls. The wind subsides and with it a plastic bag floats down and covers his mouth and nose.

His breathing starts to be constricted by the plastic over his face. He is being suffocated. He tries to pull the plastic from his face but he can't. An electric extension chord binds him. He starts to gasp. He writhes. His chest heaves. He makes one final attempt to roll over and free himself. At the peak of his struggle his eyes open for an instant. Then his breath releases. He surrenders to the plastic bag, and ultimately his own death. As the tension and life escapes from his body, the constricting household objects loosen their hold on him. The plastic bag falls softly away. All is still.

Out of the darkness emerges the small ship. It glides silently through the debris and still ocean green sheets, sailing up over his torso. Seeing the man in profile now there is movement from his mouth and throat. Something is pushing its way forth. A dark head crests from the dead man's lips, as a miniature version of himself is born. The miniature seaman raises his head and looks towards the small ship. The ship sails to anchor at the dead mans chin. Pushing his way to standing the miniature man stands on his larger self's chin. Using it as a jetty he steps down and boards his ship.

The ship and his sea captain sail along the dead man's extended arm. The sun is rising. The miniature man looks into the light and is engulfed by it. As the bright light diffuses we see the miniature man on his ship in the distance. They sail away across a calm ocean.

Credits.

DIRECTORS NOTES

The Tide Keeper is a dance and puppetry film that speaks of one man's fears for the environment and future of humanity. Blending reality and fantasy, I worked with the presence and environmental concerns of my non-performer father, conservationist Lee Stuart. The process of making *The Tide Keeper* involved developing choreography through working with his body, puppetry and the manipulation of found objects of his home.

The protagonist (and my father Lee Stuart who performs him) is a disillusioned conservationist, struggling to protect his world from rampant development. In a time of rapidly changing cultures and environmental upheaval, he strives to be true to his values.

The Tide Keeper is part of my continuing research of states of 'presence' on film. It works with the presence of a non-performer, developing choreography through the habits and proximity of his physical body in relation to his home. One of the rules of the work is that no objects or props were added to the environment. The everyday objects were found and animated on-site. The only time we broke that rule was when we introduced the miniature version of the main character, the old man.

History of the Idea

The Tide Keeper began through discussion and collaboration with my father conservationist Lee Stuart. We have now worked together on three film projects. The first outcome was *Bound*, an installation as part of my Masters in Theatre Arts in 2010. The second was when both my father and stepmother became the main protagonists of my first feature film called *The Red House* (completed in 2012). It was during *The Red House* shoot that we started making *The Tide Keeper*. It began as a surreal dream-sequence that we shot to be part of the feature film. Ultimately it wasn't the right language for the feature, so that scene ended up on the cutting room floor. Since completing *The Red House* I have often wanted to rework that dream sequence but it took a long time to find the dramaturgical arch of the idea. It was after showing the rough edit to my film mentor Australian filmmaker Rolf de Heer that inspiration struck, and I was able to write the action of short film you now see.

The real tide keeper

Lee has lived on a small island just off the coast of New Zealand for more than 30 years. His mission has been to keep the environmental integrity and sense of the small NZ community on his island. Lee is from a generation of people who cared for an island culture that is fast disappearing. In *The Tide Keeper* and my previous feature *The Red House* I was curious in how the generation we are born in changes our relationship to a

place and our perception of/approach to/aspirations for life. I think my father's generation has seen Aotearoa (New Zealand) change a lot.

In making *The Tide Keeper* I was interested in exploring in a surreal way, how it feels when the causes you were committed to and the contributions you made don't have the same emphasis now as you grow older. Your impact in the world is waning. My father was part of the 70s activist generation and is still an idealist. In *The Red House* he says: "ideally the relationship between land and people is like that of a couple deeply in love". He is trying to understand his place in a world that's changing. In *The Tide Keeper* we were exploring his personal feeling of the growing tide of environmental vulnerability, his fears for the ocean, and impact of each of us has as individuals in the household waist we produce.

Collaboration in filmmaking

For me a film is like painting with the senses, blending light, sound and emotion together with collaborators and the audience. The beauty of film is you have to be present in the moment and recognise something special is happening, and at the same time capture that moment and find out how it fits into the bigger picture of life.

Film allows me to be really curious about people and the world, and I've always loved that a film is a shared experience created in the space between my collaborators, the audience and myself. We all bring our understanding to interpret and change the work. My work becomes stronger from working with intelligent people who nurture and challenge the ideas and the implementation along the way.

BIOS OF CAST AND CREW

STARRING Lee Stuart

Lee is an anthropologist and environmentalist interested in relationships of communities with the land and sea. Living on Waiheke Island since the late 70's and working both alone and in collaboration with Greenpeace, Forest and Bird and concerned community organisations, he strove to strengthen community and ecological values. He participates in planning issues in opposition to the City Council and private developers. He has a PHD in Human Geography. His thesis looked at the social effects of our so called rights-based fisheries management system on Hauraki Gulf fishermen and their communities. His acting debut was in feature film *THE RED HOUSE* in 2012. He is the filmmaker's father.

WRITER, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER Alyx Duncan

Alyx is a filmmaker and choreographer. Her research investigates human perception in relation to place, culture and political context. Her first feature film *THE RED HOUSE* won BEST SELF-FUNDED FILM at the 2012 New Zealand Film awards, and BEST DEBUT FEATURE at ReelWorld, Toronto 2014. Alyx is currently producing Lani Feltham's short film *MOUSE*, co-writing two new feature films *THE MOON BABY'S*

DAUGHTER and WILDNESS, and working on a series of one-short shorts commissioned by Touch Compass Dance Trust.

CINEMATOGRAPHER Ben Montgomery

Studied cinematography at Unitec, and worked in the lighting department on countless projects such as commercials, feature films, music videos, and tv shows. He has a strong eye for composition. Recently he has been working on personal photographic projects including 35mm film photography.

CINEMATOGRAPHER Chris Pryor

Cinematographer & co-editor on WOODENHEAD, KAIKOHE DEMOLITION, RUBBINGS FROM A LIVE MAN and a myriad of documentaries and art projects. Chris's latest film is the award winning documentary HOW FAR IS HEAVEN which he co-directed, and shot. Chris is no stranger to crafting cinema out of life's chaos.

CONCEPT & STORY DESIGN John Downie

John Downie has had a long career as a cross-disciplinary creative artist, and as a university lecturer in theatre, film, and creative practice generally. He retired from Victoria University, Wellington in 2012. He is currently working on fictions, some new theatre works, and a dialogic art exhibition with his daughter Leda.

COMPOSER Francesca Mountfort

Francesca is originally from Wellington, New Zealand. She has toured Europe, Australia and NZ with a variety of genre spanning acts including gypsy, swing, cabaret punk, indie, and solo cello with dance.

Recent side projects include Shljivovitz Orchestra, a seven piece gypsy orchestra who bring to life uplifting traditional music from the Balkans. Graduating from Victoria University with a Bachelor of Music in 2002 and Majoring in electroacoustic composition, she set about laying down the foundations for what would become Nervous Doll Dancing.

Francesca studied cello with Rolf Gjelsten from the New Zealand String Quartet and with David Chickering, principal cellist of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

EDITOR Daniel Strang

Daniel graduated from Wintec with a Master of Arts with Distinction in 2008. He currently works as a freelance editor and director, primarily for art/performance based documentaries and music videos. He also frequently exhibits video art and photographic works in a fine art context. Strang won the Best Editor at the Kodak Music Video Awards in 2006 for Minit's "Fuji" and in 2003 Playing a Role, a short film he wrote and directed, was nominated for Best Screenplay at the New Zealand Film Awards. He edited THE RED HOUSE which won Best Self-funded film at the 2012 New Zealand Film awards.

SOUND DESIGNER Vedat Kiyici

Vedat Kiyici, Head of Sound at Envy Studios, moved to New York to study Audio Technology. After graduating the Institute of Audio Research he started his audio career in the music industry recording and mixing local bands as well as working with world-renowned musicians. In 2004, with nine years of NYC experience under his belt, he came to New Zealand. Vedat has mixed TVCs, prime time reality shows, documentaries, short films, feature films, recorded ADR, and produced bands. He has worked with clients such as Great Southern TV, Imagination TV, Screentime, Disney, Warner Bros, and Lucas Arts. His technical knowledge and expertise coupled with his ever-growing passion for sound with pictures makes him one of Auckland's top engineers.

CREDITS

Starring

Lee Stuart

Writer, Director, Producer

Alyx Duncan

Concept Design

Jason Bock

Dramaturge

John Downie

Cinematography

Ben Montgomery

Chris Pryor

Composer

Francesca Mountfort

Editor

Daniel Strang

Puppet Designer

Leda Farrow

Project Mentor

Rolf de Heer

Story Development

Lani Feltham

Rosie Remmerswaal

Puppeteers

Tallulah Holly - Massey

Anita Alexander

Jason Bock

Rosie Remmerswaal

Katherine Jarvis

Lucy Stonex

Leda Farrow

James Soloman
Maximiliano Pierret
Tom Neunzerling
Lani Feltham
Ken Rhodes
Masae Ito
Jae McDonald
Conrad Hawkins
Alys Longley
Paul Wedel
Alyx Duncan
Jeffrey Holdaway

First AD

Paul Wedel
James Soloman
Lucy Stonex

Production Manager

Lani Feltham

Production Assist

Chamolie Thompson
Lucy Stonex

Camera Assist

Tom Neunzerling

Grip

Conrad Hawkins

Grip Assist

Jae McDonald

Catering

Jeffrey Holdaway
Maximiliano Pierret
Lucy Stonex
Chamolie Thompson

POST-PRODUCTION

Development Editor

Jason Bock
Paul Wedel

Visual Effects Studios

Mandy
Flying Fish
Envy Studios
Cumulus Visual Effects

Post Effects Producers

Samantha Jukes
Anita Ward
Jason Bock

Visual Effects Artists

Jason Bock
Anita Ward
Miquel Ubeda
Sam Scott
William Gammon
Jeff A. Johnston

Sound Post

Envy Studios

Envy Producer

Samantha Jukes

Sound Design & Mix

Vedat Kiyici

Foley Recordist

James Dean

DI Services & Mastering

Park Road Postproduction

Park Road head of Production

Dean Watkins

Park Road Producer

Nina Kurzmann

Online Editor

Jason Aldous

Digital Intermediate Colourist

Vickie-Lynn Roy

Data Wrangler

Clare Brody

Deliverables Mastering Supervisor

Victoria Chu

MUSIC

Music by Nervous Doll Dancing
Performed, Recorded & Produced by Francesca Mountfort
Mastered by Nic McGowan at Island Bay Studios

“SOLO”

from the album

Eidolon

© 2012

“RED”

from the album

Nervous Doll Dancing

© 2004

“LES POMMES”

from the album

Aphelion

©2008

Thank you to

Louise Baker

Victoria Wynne-Jones

Donna Jarvis & Mark Dewar

David White

Kate Bryant
Script to Screen
Dana Rothberg
Pixie Post Fx
Alex Behse
Bill Gosden
Jonny Smith
Doug Dillaman
Catherine Fitzgerald
Dustin Feneley
Xiaobo Wang & Jan Heinze
Marie & Owen Watson
Alex Gerbaulet
Gregory King
Juan Sarmiento
Topic Photography
Bernard & Yachiyo Rhodes
Flying Fish
Esther Cahill-Chaironi
Lisa Chatfield
Katie Hecker Sheid
Jasmin McSweeney
Emma Ward
FilmUp Mentees 2013
Creative New Zealand

Special thanks to the Duncan family, Jan Young & Steve Black.

FUNDING GRATEFULLY RECEIVED FROM

