

WOODENHEAD

New Zealand / 2003 / Black and
White 90 minutes

Director / Producer
Screenplay: Florian Habicht

Director of Photography:
Christopher Pryor

Art director: Teresa Peters

Music: Marc Chesterman

Additional music: Steve Abel, Mardi
Potter, Angel & Foamy Ed.
With: Nicholas Butler, Teresa Peters,
Matthew Sunderland, Tony Bishop,
Warwick Broadhead, Jaqueline
Wilson, Henry Lee, David Hornblow,
Kerryn McMurdo, Alexa Wilson &
Georgie Hill.

Vocals: Mardi Potter, Steve Abel,
Margaret-Mary Hollins, Lutz
Halbhubner, Matthew Sunderland,
Vanessa Rhodes, Warwick
Broadhead & Henry Lee.

Festivals: Melbourne 2003
Auckland, Wellington
Christchurch New Zealand 2003
Sitges Spain 2003

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A GRIMM MUSICAL FAIRYTALE that takes a Hansel-and-Gretel-like journey through
New Zealand's towns, bush and forests.

What people are saying about Woodenhead...

"A truly unsettling, visually inventive, stylistically thrilling and quite marvellous diamond in the rough."

-James Hewison

MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

"This country has never looked so sensual, its people so damp with lust.

What else does this talented film maker know and should we let him reveal it?"

-Chris Knox REAL GROOVE MAGAZINE

"Kiwi-accented refugees from a kitsch European carnival world stutter, sing and lollop their way around a New Zealand landscape of almost ethereal, black and white beauty. There are moments Fellini might have envied when Habicht's carnival beings and his landscape coalesce in 'sad, strange and beautiful' florescence."

-Bill Gosden

NEW ZEALAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVALS

"Woodenhead is an emotional journey into a disturbing landscape- the landscape of the human spirit."

-Hernán Migoya

SITGES INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL SPAIN

"Singular New Zealand feature, not unlike a live-action Svankmajer puppet feature, if that makes sense, which the film almost did. Great stuff!" –

SENSESOFCINEMA.COM

"Kooky and wonderful"

"the sort of film you come to festivals for"

"innovative and surreal"

"sensational"

"highlight of the festival"

"truly experimental."

– audience comments from the Melbourne International Film Festival 2003.

"Habicht has here created a minor masterpiece, and I don't doubt that he will go on to give the world a major one given the time and the funding."

–Larry Jenkins, NORTHERN NEWS ARTS

"Florian Habicht's film Woodenhead is, by all accounts, an ambitious and different piece of work in the landscape of local movies."

-Graham Reid NEW ZEALAND HERALD

WOODENHEAD...

A truly unsettling, visually inventive, stylistically thrilling and quite marvellous diamond in the rough. Woodenhead takes the traditional fairy tale and re-processes it through the minds of filmmakers like Canadian master of the peculiar Guy Maddin and animators of the arcane, the Quay Brothers. Incredibly, all of the dialogue and location sound for Woodenhead was completed first and the images shot to fit a crazed reversal of accepted practice.

An innocent rubbish tip assistant, Gert, is given the task of escorting a beautiful mute "princess", Plum, on a perilous journey to meet her prospective husband. As with all such mythical quests, their journey is fraught with danger, challenges, romance and discovery. The menagerie of characters and animals they encounter, the breath-taking landscape of far-flung corners of New Zealand and the surreal action that drives their trip is all tackled in unforgettable fashion. Mirroring the archetypes of the subconscious and demons from the id that stalk the best work of Hans Christian Anderson and the Brothers Grimm, Woodenhead has a bright future ahead, frightening small children and leaving the grown-ups strangely troubled.

James Hewison MELBOURNE FILM FESTIVAL

Indescribable monochrome fairy tale unique in our cinema history...

It ain't the holiday season in Florian Habicht's *Woodenhead*, a decidedly different kettle of angst. There is, however, a circus threatening to erupt at any given moment...happily, it never does.

Woodenhead was filmed up North, in this case all over the place, Kaikohe, Ngawha, anywhere that looked good in a dark and glowering Don McCullin Northern England photo kinda way.

Habicht uses glorious monochrome, makes no attempt to recreate reality, celebrates the wild outdoors rather than the half-tamed interior, deploys music in the manner of a P.T. Anderson or David Lynch (ie; as an equal to the pictures) and has two people play almost every role.

The first thing you notice in *Woodenhead* is the faces, great characterful fizzes in the late silent cinema tradition, then the mouths which don't move in relation to the dialogue, if they move at all... This should be disconcerting and, I will confess, I initially suspected the man of godawful pretension. Such is not the case for, within a very few minutes, the lack of sync between face and voice becomes a non-issue.

Habicht wanted these faces but not all of them belonged to actors so he shot silent, having pre-recorded the dialogue with the right voice talents. Certainly part of this decision was financial (he only had \$30,000 to play with and sound operators can take up a big chunk of that) but the ability to completely control his audio environment was a decided plus. No passing cars disturb his beautifully conjured alternate Aotearoa, all sounds are carefully, artfully contrived.

The tension between this artificiality and the grainy heightened reality of the visual performances achieves exactly what the writer/director/co-cameraman/co-sound designer wanted. This is a grim fairy tale that knocks Harry Sinclair's majorly more expensive attempt at the genre right outta the ballpark. *Price of Milk* had a lot going for it, this flick actually delivers. It's a sorta blend of Svankmayer's world of puppet surreality and the Eastern European gargantua of Bela Tarr. Throw in the inevitable Lynch and a dash of the bolexbrothers and you're getting there. Definitely not your average kiwi feature.

Nicholas Butler and Teresa Peters (faces), Steve Abel and Mardi Potter (voices) as the „romantic leads, are perfect, the rest of the Brueghelesque cast are no less appropriate, even dear old Warwick Broadhead (who does his own voice...of course). Peters also art directs magnificently and mention must be made of Marc Chesterman and Christopher Pryor for their major contributions to sound and sight respectively.

CHRIS KNOX - REAL GROOVE MAGAZINE

Woodenhead...

If you've ever wondered what was really going through the Grimm Brother's minds when they wrote all those tales of woods and wolves and lost little girls, well here's your chance to find out. Welcome to *Woodenhead*, a film in which the subterranean perversions inherent in any good fairy tale have been brought rumbling and gushing to the surface.

There aren't any big bad wolves, but there are cows, sheep, a donkey named Gerhard and a kid goat that's been trained to lick the soles of people's feet. There's no Snow White or Cinderella, instead a mute princess called Plum, and an 'innocent' dump-hand named Gert, who believes he is 'the luckiest man under the sun.'

Woodenhead is a genuinely committed look at the notion of the fairy tale, made modern not so much by a change of setting or period as by the confusion of good and evil and the perversion of right and wrong. The characters' profiles are anything but black and white, and the characters themselves are all (even the 'good' ones) more than a little creepy.

What is black and white is the photography, the absence of colour beautifully transforming those majestic New Zealand landscapes into a brooding world of enchanted woods and treacherous hillsides. You've seen *Lord of the Rings*, well here's the dark side, and a much more subversive attempt to exploit the inherently pornographic potential of New Zealand's natural settings. And you can bet your last bag of magic beans *Woodenhead* will be attracting a very different brand of tourist to New Zealand shores.

Woodenhead's most striking feature is that the entire dialogue and 'location' sound is pre-recorded. The visuals were shot posthumously to the soundtrack, reversing the usual priority that is given to pictures. Enabling an extra-ordinary combination of actors, musicians and real personalities that would otherwise not be possible, and creating an oddball magical fairytale world.

So if all that's not enough to make you want to see *Woodenhead*, you might also like to know that it includes a frothing tramp in dirty underwear, one of the most beautiful songs I've ever heard in a movie, and a final battle scene that looks like *Highlander* gone very, very wrong. And if that's still not enough, there are a couple of sex scenes that'll put a wry and dirty smirk on your face the next time you see a baby's bottle.

-Peter Odonoghue, Gritsalute.com

Could this be New Zealand?

Gert, 'an innocent dump hand', is ordered by the dump owner (an imperious Warwick Broadhead) to deliver his beautiful mute daughter, Princess Plum, to her wedding. Like a jaded, over-age Hansel and Gretel, the two trek through forest and glen coping with numerous bizarre characters who cross their path. Florian Habicht describes his gregariously eccentric feature as a 'celebration of the sad, strange and beautiful, and a cross-pollination of Kiwi and Germanic culture, echoing my experience as an immigrant to Aotearoa'. He's turned the ungainliness of transplantation into a personal style. Disjunction is accentuated by his method of first creating his final soundtrack and then directing the film to play against it, in synch and out. Kiwi-accented refugees from a kitsch European carnival world stutter, sing and lollop their way around a New Zealand landscape of almost ethereal, black and white beauty. There are moments Fellini might have envied when Habicht's carnival beings and his landscape coalesce in 'sad, strange and beautiful' florescence.

Bill Gosden - NEW ZEALAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVALS

Introducing Florian Habicht.

Woodenhead's Producer, Director, Writer and Camera Operator.

28 year old Florian Habicht is an innovative independent digital video/film maker.

His films combine a unique sense of humour and odd-ball narratives with seductive and lush imagery. They celebrate the sad, strange and beautiful, and are a cross pollination of Kiwi and Germanic culture, echoing Florian's experience as an immigrant to Aotearoa, and giving him a unique cinematic voice.

'Being able to mix photography, music, humour, soft pornography, performance, storytelling and experimentation into one form of expression is what drew me to film making. Being able to create films with my family of friends. Making films has made me appreciate life more and thrown me into situations, places and that would otherwise be undiscovered.'

Florian's philosophy is that he would rather try something new (if only to create seeds towards his further development) than follow the safer footsteps of conventional film-making.

Since graduating from the Elam School of Fine Arts in 1998, his three digital video feature film projects have all been granted funding by the Creative New Zealand Screen Innovation Fund.

'Liebestraume' 1998 was the first funded digital video feature made in New Zealand. The film is an experimental semi-fictional documentary that follows Auckland Cult performer 'Killer Ray' to the streets of Bangkok, Thailand.

'Kaikohe Demolition' 80 mins, (now in post production) is an intimate and 'poetic' portrayal of the Kaikohe Car Club's 'Soul Surviving' Demolition Derby. A documentary portraying the innocence and beauty of a violent spectator sport.

Last year, Florian was a finalist in *the SPADA New Zealand New Film Maker award*, who's judges included Nikki Caro, director of Whale rider. In 2002, Florian was the Video designer for Douglas Wright's 'Inland.' In 1985 Habicht won the '*best decorated bicycle award*' at Paihia Primary School.

Introducing Marc Chesterman

Composer for Woodenhead. (and Sound designer with Florian.)

Marc has worked with Florian as composer and sound designer since 1997's 16mm short *Liebestraume*. This little gem sowed the seed for *Woodenhead* in terms of a sound and image relationship.

Music for Florian often takes on a jazzy flavour, with swinging rhythms, vibes, and trumpet. All inspired by 60's big-bands. Sampling of instruments turns the focus towards a music of sounds and atmospheres.

'Together with Florian we've created a dynamic relationship between image and sound that doesn't always dictate audience reaction. Sometimes image and sound are joined like a music video, sometimes the two work against each other. At other times there's space between image and sound for an audience to interpret their own feelings.'

Marc has also made soundtracks and live mixes for *Mau Dance Theatre*, and performs with improvisational music group *Audible 3*.

<http://www.cracklingfire.net/mc.htm>

The Woodenhead Soundtrack was released during the New Zealand International Film Festival.

Contributing musicians include Steve Abel, Mardi Potter, Edward Hanfling, Angel, Richard Noble and New Zealand Cult performer Killer Ray.

KNOCKING ON WOOD.

Woodenhead, "a grimm musical fairytale" that takes a "Hansel-and-Gretel-like journey through New Zealand's towns, bush and forests", has been accepted to screen at this year's Film Festivals in Auckland and Wellington, as well as the Melbourne International Film Festival. The black and white digital feature is a collaboration between director-sound designer Florian Habicht (a 2002 SPADA New Filmmaker finalist) and composer-sound designer Marc Chesterman, it was funded - like Habicht's other digi features (Liebesträume and upcoming Kaikohe Demolition) - by the Screen Innovation Fund. Woodenhead is the tale of Gert, a naive dump-hand who believes he is the luckiest man under the sun.

Interestingly, the filmmakers were interested in "pushing the synergistic qualities of audio and picture." To this end, the entire dialogue/soundtrack for Woodenhead was pre-recorded, with the visuals then shot to fit the soundtrack, reversing the usual priority. (Music and dialogue were recorded late 2001, while the five week shoot in the Bay of Islands and Far North kicked off in March 2002).

Says Habicht, "This technique allowed us to first focus purely on sound and then - during shooting - focus entirely on the visual performances. It also enabled us to use untrained-actors in lead roles. The type of people I chose to cast were real people with peculiar, odd and/or unique personalities. People with an 'X factor' who would conventionally be more suited for documentaries than fiction. An extra-ordinary combination of real personalities, actors and musicians would otherwise not have been possible, and contributed to Woodenhead's oddball magical fairytale world."

"Separate auditions were held for visual performers and for voices. Some of the visual performers speak/sing the voices of their characters or have 'voice cameos' for other characters, while the main characters - played by Teresa Peters and Nicholas Butler - have their dialogue and singing supplied by Auckland musicians and singers Mardi Potter and Steve Abel (reminiscent of '80s pop duo Milli Vanilli!).

According to Habicht, recording the dialogue and soundtrack first didn't inhibit the visual performances. "Actually," he says, "approaches to performance were often decided after the soundtrack was completed. This was because I encouraged the visuals to often contradict the sound. The soundtrack is innocent, like a radio play for children, and yet the visuals are sometimes grotesque, violent or subversive. For example, during the first sex scene, the narrator sweetly tells us that "Plum and Gert had kissed for the first time..."

Despite the film's success thus far in being selected for film festivals, "I wouldn't say we have perfected the approach by any means," says Habicht. "Woodenhead is experimental and we could make another film this way to capitalise on what we've learnt."

Onfilm Magazine May 2003

New Zealand Musical Fairytale premieres at this years International Film Festival.

Early last year I had the unique opportunity to work as Production Manager on the set of *Woodenhead*, a New Zealand feature film driven by a twisted, Brothers Grimm-style plot, imbued with fantastical atmosphere, and featuring an eccentric array of fairytale characters.

The film was shot in Northland, the childhood stomping ground of (Berlin born) director / writer / producer Florian Habicht. The rugged sublimity of the featured landscapes, coupled with unmistakably kiwi twangs in voices of the principal characters, root this Germanic fable firmly in Aotearoa.

This culturally skewed aesthetic is further made manifest in the art direction of Teresa Peters (who also plays the lead female role), which blends a European carnival flavour with kiwi kitsch. The sets comprise memorabilia of mixed cultural heritage and from wide-ranging eras; turn-of last century circus timepieces sitting alongside crumbling retro relics of the 1960s.

Despite the disparate periods and localities contributing to the film's "look", a seamless and timeless world is created which is an amalgam of these differing styles. Captured in black and white by the photography of Chris Pryor, this is the stage in which the yarn unravels.

The plot of *Woodenhead* centres around Gert, played by newcomer Nicholas Butler, a hard working dump-hand with the naive notion that he is the "luckiest man under the sun". In typical fairytale style he is sent on a journey to deliver his boss' daughter, the beautiful Plum (Peters), safely to her wedding.

The well-meaning chaperone sets off with all the best intentions, but inevitable obstacles present themselves at every leg of the journey. These are exacerbated by the interference of an evil gimp-like manservant who has been sent to dupe the pair (Tony Bishop) and an escaped circus strongman (Matthew Sunderland), who both seem slightly deranged.

The film features appearances from a range of decidedly quirky characters, which function within the narrative as "mythic" archetypes and yet exude weirdly unique personalities. These include the incomparable Warrick Broadhead as Hugo, Gert's boss; a lunatic tramp, played by David Hornblow; and Mr Henry Lee as the circus ringmaster.

Additional members of the cast largely remain invisible to the audience, although they play principal parts. In a reversal of the conventional order of film production, the entire soundtrack (music, dialogue & 'location sound') was recorded before the visuals were shot, with a separate ensemble of voice-actors (although a few play both visual and vocal roles).

The result is a continual tension between the on-screen action and soundtrack, which at times almost merge into synthesis, and at others times are unabashedly out-of-sync. This audio-visual dynamic infuses the film with an eerily disjointed, dreamlike quality, the world of the narrative hovering mirage-like between two distinct but supplementary sensory experiences.

The voices of Gert and Plum are spoken by Auckland based musicians Steve Abel and Mardi Potter, and their vocals feature on several musical numbers arranged mainly by Marc Chesterman, with additional tracks composed by the singers themselves. Another prominent feature of the soundtrack is a narration by Margaret-Mary Hollins, whose motherly intonations become increasingly disturbing with each deviant twist of the tale.

Woodenhead will debut in July at the New Zealand International Film Festival, with screenings in Auckland and Wellington. The film has also been accepted for exhibition in the Melbourne International Film Festival in July / August.

Shot on DVcam on a budget of NZ\$30,000, *Woodenhead* is a production that was made possible by the blood, sweat, tears, and passionate commitment of many, and a project that I feel honoured to have been a part of.

Prue Cunningham - Bravo Digital Magazine May 2003

Arts on A Wednesday # 54 for July 24, 2003-07-18 Larry Jenkins.
Northland News

"Woodenhead" a masterful work by Florian Habicht

I'd never spotted a spotted ass before, but there it was, tethered to the railing of the Auckland Public Library. Well, I say spotted, perhaps dappled would be a better word. Anyway, it was a white, four-legged animal with long ears and splotches of black and brown spread around it, and it was very friendly too; nuzzled my hand. I longed for a sugar cube.

Its presence there above the Academy Cinema (which is below the APL) heralded somehow the premiere of Florian Habicht's film "Woodenhead", its first screening on Monday night having received a lot of press attention. I was to find out later just how the little donkey fitted in as the film progressed, but the glittering young things who were attending the long-awaited appearance of "Woodenhead" were gathered and waiting in the rather small foyer of the cinema on Lorne Street. I joined them.

Florian towered a good head above them all. (I don't remember his being so tallÉ) He was, of course, full of nervous energy - some trouble with the projection equipment contributing to his jitters. His partner Teresa Peters, star of the film, wore her op-shop beads and pinkish boa with the calm assurance that only someone as striking looking as she can do. We were eventually herded to our seats and, after a long thank-you introduction, the show got on the road.

"On the road" is exactly where it got, for the film is about a journey, and sure enough, well into the film there was that ass, - or another one (ass, not film) this one very much a solid brown one like the ones we all know. Astride it was the aforementioned Ms Peters, led along by Gert (played by Nicholas Butler, who is making his film debut in this role). Wait a minute, here is a clear allusion - the Virgin Mary en route to Bethlehem, led not by her husband Joseph but by Charlie Chaplin.

Habicht's film is full of other references - to Shakespeare, for instance. The central plot is a bit like "The Tempest" gone very wrong. Warwick Broadhead's dump owner is without a doubt Prospero, Peters' Princess Plum, his Miranda, and the appearance of Matthew Sunderland's Calaban-esque character confirmed, in my mind, anyway, that young Habicht is not only erudite but somewhat of an iconoclast, too, rather prone to sending up cultural deities.

Further in to the film we find other obeisances - Peters, dressed only in a scanty pair of panties and a dog collar, on her knees and on a leash. What else could this be but a nod in the direction of the great director Pasolini's "Salo, or the 120 Days of Sodom."?

I mention this because much has been said about the film's fairy-tale origins and inferences having been drawn from the Brothers Grimm, from the circus world, and from various Teutonic influences such as the film "The Tin Drum." But no-one, bar yours truly, has seemed to twig that the two most powerful tugs on Habicht's imagination in this work are Italian arthouse films and the Bard of Avon.

Shot magnificently, despite a risible budget, by Christopher Pryor in black and white, the film will raise cries of recognition around here, as it was filmed almost entirely around Kaikohe, Ngapha, and TaraTara, near Kaeo. The landscape looms large and the camera sweeps majestically around it, contrasting its grandeur with scenes of squalid rubbish tips and abandoned, rusting cars.

It's not often that one stares into the face of genius. Habicht has here created a minor masterpiece, and I don't doubt that he will go on to give the world a major one given the time and the funding.

Craccum Magazine Film Review by Camile.

\Woodenhead!

Woodenhead is one of five New Zealand films playing at this years' Auckland International Film Festival, and it was the first of all the films, including the International ones playing this year, to sell out completely for the first screening last Tuesday 15th July. Woodenhead is directed by Florian Habicht, a Fine Arts graduate who studied Intermedia at Elam. It was made by recording the sound first, using voice artists and singers. As Habicht stated in his speech at the world premiere in Auckland, he made a 'kind of radio play', following which he filmed the black and white visuals to arrive at the brilliantly original and often funny end product. Woodenhead is the story of a dump hand named Gert, played by the subtlety brilliant Nicholas Butler; Gert is a simple man who is contented by the smallest of pleasures, such as clean clothes and a warm bed. His adventure begins when he must leave the dump, his home, in order to take his boss' daughter Plum, played by Habicht's girlfriend and the film's art director, Teresa Peters, to her wedding.

At times when Habicht has the opportunity to shock, the innocence of the narrative and of the storybook- like characters works to counteract the possibility of disgust. The fairy-tale nature of the narrative is in turn detached from anything childlike or mystical by the raw humanity depicted, where people snort and chortle like animals, and the rawness of the Northland landscapes. Mud and dust play a part in this movie, overshadowed by the leading star, the foreboding clouds. Innocence remains even after a raw sex scene, when the narrator begins the next scene with 'Plum and Gert had kissed for the first time'.

The characters whom Gert and Plum meet on their journey are desolate outcasts who communicate with animal-like sounds and actions. Like the donkey, an animal that can be seen to symbolise outcasts in general, and one that plays a part in the narrative as well as in the media representation of this film, Habicht's characters are unusual and interesting to watch. Each shot is composed for visual satisfaction resulting in an aesthetically dark and beautiful film. His humour, which breaks up the darkness of the visuals, is in turn dark and ironic; sometimes you have to listen carefully to catch the jokes.

This is a film that is shady both visually and in terms of subject, but one that alludes to the beauty of simplicity and calls for acceptance of all characters and all situations. Even half-dressed men sleeping in the middle of the forest are not portrayed as evil, despite their animal intentions with Plum. They simply exist and must be lived with.

As satisfying as a fairytale, but pointing to the vast realities of being human and a general notion towards acceptance of those who seem to be from, in the case of this film, an entirely different plane, Woodenhead presents a simple story that leaves a viewer smiling.

There are two screenings remaining on Thursday 24th July at 11am and Friday 25th July at 8.15pm at Village Cinemas on Queen Street.

Fairy-tale beginning NZ LISTENER MAGAZINE JULY 2003

Inside the odd and distinctly German world of local film-maker Florian Habicht.

Florian Habicht was born in Berlin but raised in the Bay of Islands - his German family emigrated when he was seven - and that shift might account for the bizarre sensations of his film *Woodenhead*. Here, the New Zealand landscape is the setting for a dark and surreal fairy-tale - there are circuses, magic beans, accordions, a cottage hidden in the woods - rendered in black and white at a dream-like trance speed. The German magic realism of *The Tin Drum* was a big influence - Habicht remembers seeing that video a lot as a kid. "Having a European aesthetic in a New Zealand film is something that came about quite naturally," he explains.

Shy, funny and enthusiastic - "Yeah, yeah, super," he says, grinning and nodding when complimented - 27-year-old Habicht is about to spring his strange movie on an unsuspecting world. *Woodenhead* has its premiere in the Auckland International Film Festival this week - bookings are so heavy that two more dates have been added to the original two. Habicht must have a lot of friends. "Everyone's known about this film because ."

". We've been making it for such a long time," says Habicht's partner and collaborator, Teresa Peters. "We've definitely been rarking people up to come."

Besides playing the New Zealand festivals, *Woodenhead* has - along with their friend Gregory King's low-budget feature, *Christmas* - been accepted into this month's Melbourne International Film Festival. Habicht expects that a *Woodenhead* posse of about five or six may go to Melbourne with the film.

Most of the film's core group are, like Habicht and Peters, products of Elam Art School. Even, they note, the eccentric busker, masked jazz singer and cult figure Killer Ray, who appears in the opening credits and was the subject of an earlier Habicht film. "Killer Ray did drawing and painting. In his lunch hours, he used to visit jazz bars on Queen St. He didn't graduate."

Habicht studied intermedia, which incorporates video and performance. "It has a strong experimental emphasis," he says. "It's not film school, it's art school where you learn through your mistakes." Peters studied painting and besides being the film's co-star, she is its art director. At Elam, Habicht began making experimental short films, including one in which his cast - friends, artists and performers rather than actors - had their voices post-dubbed. "It had that feel of a foreign, badly dubbed film, which had a humorous effect as well. I think [disgraced lip-synchers] Milli Vanilli were an inspiration! Remember how the world was so angry at Milli Vanilli?"

After that, some people told Habicht that he ought to use proper actors next time. Naturally, he did something else: he recorded Woodenhead's soundtrack before shooting the film. He wanted to use Peters and his friend Nicholas Butler as the film's central, Hansel-and-Gretel-like couple, Gert and Plum, but neither had voice training. So the film was recorded with different performers - singers Steve Abel and Mardi Potter - and then shot with the finished soundtrack as a guide, much like other directors might use a storyboard.

To say that this is an unusual approach is an understatement - animated films aside, Habicht knows of no previous examples in which the soundtrack was made first (a possible exception is Derek Jarman's *Blue*, which had a full soundtrack and a blue screen, but no filmed images). This innovation enabled Habicht to cast for faces and there are some memorable ones in the film. Tony Bishop, an Elam graduate and trained clown, plays a barnyard maniac called Geordel - he has the look of Quasimodo from a production of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. "I wish *Lord of the Rings* had more people like him, more interesting faces," Habicht says.

"Florian likes to celebrate the quirks of humanity," Peters says. "So many people don't read that as a language, but his films are full of that. Documenting craziness or idiosyncrasies ."

"And they're all my friends, the people in the film," he adds.

"WE'RE LUCKY," Peters says, "because we're partners and we also share, not quite the same aesthetic, but we understand each other on that level. Reality and fantasy are part of our being for both of us - we love a gritty raw reality and a contrived one at the same time. That's what *Woodenhead* was trying to achieve." "Is achieving!" interjects Habicht, laughing. "Is achieving," continues Peters, "in, hopefully, an unpretentious way."

Ask what other films have achieved this mix, and the answer is immediate: Lars von Trier's *Dancer in the Dark*, a musical suffused with dread. "We were both affected really deeply by that," Habicht says. *Woodenhead* has songs, too - Gert's one, sung by Abel, is about being "the luckiest man under the sun".

As Gert works in a garbage dump, audiences might take this as ironic, but, like Bjork's character in *Dancer*, it's about innocence not delusion. Eccentricity is celebrated in Habicht's films; he loves private worlds, fabricated personae (it seems right that flamboyant theatre actor and director Warwick Broadhead should also have a part in *Woodenhead*). *Liebesträume*, Habicht's film about Killer Ray, threw many with its blend of fantasy and documentary. Even as New Zealand has produced some great fantasy film-makers - Peter Jackson, Vincent Ward - we like truth and fiction to be discrete categories. Incorporating fiction into documentary is a trademark of German film-maker Werner Herzog. "Totally," agrees Habicht, noting the influence.

Documentary is a debased form here - television is largely to blame for that - and it could do with the more intuitive associations that someone such as Habicht would bring. That should make his next film - a nearly completed documentary on the Kaikohe demolition derby - a fascinating prospect. It captures what he sees as "the innocence and harmony" of that event. He and Christopher Pryor, Woodenhead's cinematographer, have shot for three years, getting demolition footage and interviews with drivers, some of which were conducted in the Ngawha hot pools. "It's really beautiful, just them, no clothes, the bubbles and nature. It's really peaceful, then there's the mud, the loud car noise, the odd Guns N' Roses track."

Like Woodenhead, it has been made on small grants from Creative New Zealand's Screen Innovation Production Fund. Habicht would like it known that "they rock!" The SIFP contributed \$25,000 to Woodenhead's final, tiny budget of \$30,000 - and that grant is at the top end of that body's capacity. "I've been lucky, but it would be nice if they had more money," he says. Like many in the low-budget industry, Habicht has hopes about a potential digital-video fund under the auspices of the New Zealand Film Commission. The NZFC did come to the Woodenhead party with money for marketing and publicity, which has allowed Habicht to produce a website and Peters to design the striking posters and flyers.

Alas, money is always tight for the experimental film-maker. Habicht has worked as a wedding photographer to pay the bills - that was actually useful in scouting Woodenhead locations, he says - and was once inspired to write to Jenny Gibbs about possible sponsorship. "She said she doesn't support films, only the visual arts." For Peters, though, this kind of DIY-ism can seem preferable to the divisions of labour on a normal film set. "I'm a painter and that's much more of a solo pursuit. Florian's done pretty much every job on Woodenhead. To a painter, that seems to make sense - he can bring the individual touch to all parts of it."

Habicht wrote, directed, produced, co-edited, did some camera operating, found the locations . as they say, he did everything but be in it.

"Oh, I'm in it, too! I'm the guy playing the accordion."

Philip Matthews - NZ LISTENER MAGAZINE JULY 2003

"WOODENHEAD y CRESPIÀ: el surrealismo en las antípodas

Dos de los films más inusuales y originales de BRIGADOON 2003 son estos dos títulos que, pese a la distancia de su origen, tienen alguna cosa en común: la neozelandesa Woodenhead y la catalana Crespià.

La primera se autodefine como „un cuento de hadas musical de los hermanos Grimm%00, y ofrece un alucinante viaje por los paisajes casi vírgenes y desconocidos para nosotros de Nueva Zelanda, un entorno salvaje y agreste que aporta la atmósfera de ensoñación que requiere la historia. Su director Florian Habicht, uno de los jóvenes realizadores más prometedores de aquella ahora emergente cinematografía, se metió en tierras indígenas protegidas, sin permiso gubernamental alguno, y filmó a placer en unos decorados naturales que cualquier artista daría un brazo por conseguir. Woodenhead es un film obligado para todos los amantes del cine independiente y vanguardista. A la estupenda fotografía se suma un original tratamiento del sonido: todas las voces están grabadas a posteriores y no se corresponden con las gesticulaciones de los actores. A destacar también el protagonista, Nicolas Butler, un Buster Keaton perdido en la inmensidad de su cabeza, y Teresa Peters, una joven y prometedora actriz que se ha ocupado también de la dirección de arte. En suma, un turbador periplo por el alma oscura del hombre. Contacto: www.woodenhead.co.nz

Para redondearlo, antes estrenaremos dos cortometrajes cuyas directoras están poseídas por un bello espíritu surrealista: The Girl with the Pearl Suspended, de Natalija Vekik, que coincide con Woodenhead en su atmósfera de cuento infantil e imagería circense (pero en su caso pintado de colores) y El rostro de Ido, de Paula Ortiz, otro cuento sobre un bello joven que pierde los rasgos de la cara, nuevo eslabón en la emergente carrera de la joven realizadora zaragozana."

Hernán Migoya -
BRIGADOON

SITGES International Film Festival of Spain.

"WOODENHEAD and CRESPIÀ: Surrealism... Two of the most unusual and original films of BRIGADOON 2003. It is these two titles that in spite of the distance of their origin, have some thing in common. The New Zealand 'Woodenhead' and the Catalan 'Crespià.' The first film is described as a musical fairy tale of the Grimm brothers, it offers a hallucinating trip to the almost virgin landscapes to strangers for us of New Zealand. Wild and rustic surroundings that contribute the ensoñación atmosphere that requires history. The director Florian Habicht, one of the young more promising directors from that now emerging cinema put in protected indigenous earth, without governmental permission at times, and filmed pleasingly in a natural scenery that any artist would give an arm to obtain.

Woodenhead is a film for all the lovers of the independent and vanguardista cinema. To the wonderful photography an original treatment of the sound is added: all the voices are pre-recorded- they do not correspond with the gesticulaciones of the actors.

To also honor the protagonist, Nicolas Butler, a Buster lost Keaton in the immensity of its head, and Teresa Peters, a young person and promising actress who has also taken care of the films art direction. In sum, disturbing periplo by the dark soul of the man. Visit: www.woodenhead.co.nz Before we will screen two short films whose directors are had by a beautiful surrealist spirit: The Girl with the Pearl Suspended, of Natalija Vekik, that agrees with Woodenhead in its atmosphere of circus fairytale and imagería (but in its painted case of colors) and the Gone face of, of Paula Ortiz, another story about a beautiful young person that loses the characteristics of the face.

(english translation from festival publication)

The Age, Melbourne, August 1, 2003 by Jim Schembri

Sounds, camera, action!

The creator of experimental film Woodenhead, Florian Habicht, wanted to make a film like no other, writes Jim Schembri.

It was the climax to one of the greatest days in the young life of Florian Habicht. There he stood on Sunday night in front of a packed cinema at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, his face wearing a constant smile, his voice as excited and adrenalised, his legs splayed out behind the podium as though he was about to couple with it.

Habicht was introducing his experimental feature, *Woodenhead*, to its first audience outside his homeland, New Zealand, where it had already toured. It was the first time any of his films had screened beyond Kiwi shores. Everyone could tell he was excited.

He then told them about a dream, the inspiration behind *Woodenhead*. He'd first had this dream three years ago. He had it again the previous night. It went something like this:

"I was on a sports field and it was night. It was pouring down with rain really hard, and the whole field was empty and lit by really bright white neon lighting, like film-set lighting or stadium lighting. Two angels came down from the sky in the rain, and as they got closer I noticed they were Rastafarian angels with dreadlocks. As they came even closer into frame I realised - oh my God - it was Milli Vanilli, the pop duo. I'm a big fan.

"They came up to me and said, 'Hey, Florian, we have something to tell you. We didn't sing our songs on our records'. I said, 'I know. I'm aware'. The next thing they said was, 'Florian, on your next film we want you to pre-record the entire soundtrack for your film first. We want you to pre-record all the voices, all the dialogue and all the music'. Then the last thing they said was, 'Baby, don't forget my number'."

Habicht had tried this technique before with a short film. "It had the feeling of a badly dubbed foreign film, and it had a humorous effect, a bit like an old Fellini film. The experiment of *Woodenhead* was to take that concept to a real extreme and actually make a film in the reverse order that you conventionally do it. It's a little bit like what they do for animation, but there's a real strong reason why people don't do it for live action. Lots of people said, 'You know why people don't make films like that, don't you, Florian? You've thought about this, haven't you?'"

He certainly had. After laying down the soundscape for the film, Habicht listened to it over and over, composing visuals to match the sounds, which he shot with his dedicated cast and crew in stark monochrome in the ever-photogenic New Zealand landscape.

In a nutshell - which is not really the place you should try to put a film such as this - *Woodenhead* is, in Habicht's words, "a black-and-white musical Grimm fairytale about an innocent dump hand called Gert (Nicholas Butler, above) who believes he's the luckiest man under the sun, who has to deliver the beautiful mute Princess Plum, the dump boss's daughter, to her wedding".

In the super-heated confines of the ACMI cinema there were a few walkouts, but most of the 500-strong crowd stuck it out for the full 90 minutes. The feedback Habicht received that night and all the next day put him in a great frame of mind by the time we met to chat at 4.30pm at the Festival Club.

"People totally got into the film," he said. "We've had so much amazing feedback, just bumping into people here and (they're) going, 'Oh man, we loved it so much! It's the most original film we've seen in the festival'."

This is what he wanted. "These days, everything's been done before, and the people that have loved the film have said, 'Wow, it's incredible to see something so fresh and that hasn't been done'. Generally, when you show people a film, they always say it's a mixture between this and that, but *Woodenhead* is definitely a totally unique recipe."

"I definitely want my next film to be very different. I don't want to make the same film twice. My main concern is I'd rather try and make something different and fail, but at least it'll build to my personal development as a filmmaker rather than try to make a film based on a conventional formula that I know works.

"I'd rather take the challenge to do something that hasn't been done. The film I made before, *Liebstraume* (2000), mixed fiction and documentary. Lots of people in New Zealand found that quite hard to deal with, because it wasn't a documentary and it wasn't a fiction film with a story. They found it quite confusing."

Habicht recently completed *Kaikohe Demolition*, a documentary about a demolition derby in small-town Kaikohe.

"Demolition derbies are generally violent spectator sports, whereas in Kaikohe it's not about anger or getting revenge on people or about money," he says. "It's purely a family event. People love it; it's where the community gets together".

At 28, Berlin-born but a Kiwi since he was eight, his film tastes are broad and not at all anti-Hollywood - "I love to watch a bad Hollywood movie and laugh at it and with it, (but) I'm against the money they put into Hollywood films" - although he cites films such as *The Tin Drum* (1979) and *Dancer In the Dark* (2000) as key influences. "That film really f---ed me up and moved me and turned me on. It had that real humanness about it."

As the writer, director and producer of *Woodenhead*, Habicht is still looking for a local distributor. Made for \$NZ30,000 (\$A26,600), the film was supported by the Screen Innovation Production Fund of Creative New Zealand, the brief of which is to encourage cinematic experimentation. A change of tack for his next film, however, will require a new source of funding.

"My next film I want to hopefully do through the film commission, so on a technical level it can't be that experimental, like *Woodenhead*, for them to fund it, but that suits me really well, because I want to concentrate next time more on a really interesting story and do experimental things more with the characters and the story rather than the technique."

(This is an edited version. For the full article visit www.woodenhead.co.nz)

Stephanie Beth's Interview with Nicholas Butler: Gert male lead of Woodenhead

Stephanie Beth: Hello Nicholas. Thanks for agree to an interview. You like to work for Florian Habicht? You've been a lead for him before in " Der Fisch" (2001) What's it like working on his ideas on a project by project basis?

Nicholas Butler: I love working for Florian. He's a good director who tells you what he wants but improvisation is appreciated as well. Sometimes it's nice when it's left up to you. During the dance scene we were not choreographed. It was a case of let's see how this will work. He's not the arrogant type of director who sits in the background on the chair shouting out orders to the crew and actors. Instead you will see him walking around, talking to everyone, being really involved. His funny jokes and impersonations puts everyone in a good mood. He has a real passion and drive, which I admire. We both have a shared vision of the strange, the non conventional. We are very interested to know what his next project will contain.

S.B. Can you give a little background to Der Fisch and how you connected with Florian

N.B. It's a short film with music by Fellini's composer Nino Rota. There are some lovely shots of swimming and water with great sound effects, all shot at the Tepid Baths in the central city. I can't remember when it came about. Maybe he observed my unusual traits (especially my swimming style!) when we used to go swimming at the tepid pools. We are close friends. Sometimes it can be strange when as a director he is observing you closely... even when we are not filming!

S.B Your quote in the Company Press kit seems to ring well. " Great moments are those in life or art when something magical, very beautiful happens." I considered the shots of you in full song one of these in Woodenhead. At the point of that acting, did you feel you were involved in art? How so?

N.B I love being moved emotionally. For example I love it when a beautiful piece of music takes you somewhere else. I'm a dreamy person, who loses track of what I'm doing easily (it's my Aquarian moon sign I've been told!). In the film when I'm singing I was experiencing the music. It was a beautiful morning when we shot the scene, and it felt really amazing. I was involved in art because the music was involving me emotionally. When you act it's great if you can draw on your own feelings and respond accordingly. But sometimes it's hard to get that feeling. That's what makes it a challenge.

S.B. Has Marc Chesterman's collaboration had an affect upon you as an actor

N.B. It hasn't had a direct affect. But there were a few scenes when I had to act with the music or soundtrack playing. It brought out a response in meat times like the singing scene. I have grown to appreciate Marc's contribution even more after watching the film a few times and listening to the soundtrack. The film stands well on it's own right in audible form. It would make a great radio play.

S.B. I have lived in Northland. If the landscape seemed to keep your focus whilst you acted in **Woodenhead** it is no surprise. The back roads and rolling hillsides have charm. You walked through all the landscapes for the film with great tolerance. Were you imagining yourself in the scale Florian was creating? Is there a little of you in it so compliant because you are, first and foremost a painter? Are you, first and foremost a painter?

N.B. It was amazing working in the landscape. Almost everyday you would be somewhere else, some where beautiful. Seeing the sun rise over a misty isolated valley is some thing to remember forever. I didn't imagine myself in the end product. It was hard to foresee how it would turn out as the scenes were shot out of sequence. We didn't really talk about what Gert is like. That was left up to me. The direction for me came scene by scene. There is some **Woodenhead** in me as I like fantastical, imaginary, and weird situations. One of my favourite scenes was the grandma scene. It's so full on, really off beat and a bit shocking...and I loved the make up and dressing up!
I'm not first and foremost a painter, but someone with visual discernment.

S.B. Did you enjoy the high level of no dialogue in the film?

N.B. It was actually quite hard at times, especially when I was meant to be talking. People have said that it must have made it easier not talking in the film. Sure I didn't have to learn lines, etc. But it left all the expression up to me in a visual way. My face and body had to communicate to the audience and say it all without words. The muteness was appealing as I can relate to the feeling of being detached, an outsider. Sometimes you just don't feel like talking.

S.B. I thought your tight suit was a fitting costume for you. It seemed to make the archetypal characteristics of Gert fetching. How does clothing help you as an actor?

N.B. Clothing helps as it can draw on your feelings. One of Gert's shoe heels is bigger than the other. I had to walk in every scene with them on. It drew on the emotional struggle Gert went through, having to go through difficulties, awkwardness. In the grandma scene I'm dressed up like a grandma. Without the clothing and make up it wouldn't have been the same...and not nearly as enjoyable!.

S.B. Can you say something about the Elam environment. Many of you have felt inspired to be collaborative. How has this come about?

N.B. You are at Elam really to have the time and space to be creative with a creatively minded community. It's not a course when you're learning technical stuff every day. You're left to your own to work with some input from others at times. It's up to you to do something. Film is a collaborative art form so it had to happen. You have to draw on people's abilities and ask for favours and help in film. Our crew were not doing it as a job but rather something they felt passionate about. I suppose the idea of working on a cool project and hanging out with good mates for over five weeks in the sunny far north appealed!.

S.B. My gosh, Killer Ray is 74 and a graduate of the Elam School of Fine Arts. Has that institution been of value to several of you? What will you all, the post Elam set, be doing in a decade's time?

N.B. Elam has been valuable for its life experience, working with creative people during the degree and afterwards. It's been great being aware of all the creativity going on and all the people involved. The people in our year were a pretty interesting bunch and will continue to be really industrious.

S.B. I am interested to see Warrick Broadhead have a metiere in the next generation of New Zealand cinema. He is, rightly, New Zealand's "nonverbal master". Have you known him long? Did he give you any tips?

N.B. I haven't known Warwick for very long. It's great having Florian for a friend as you get to meet all these interesting people. Warwick helped me once when I had to scream!.

S.B. You men, Gert and Gustov, are portrayed to us in a most affectionate way. Men who don't get their brides. What is to be done? What were you thinking about the rationales of Grimm whilst you acted a fairytale?
What is in **Woodenhead** for all of us do you think?

N.B. Perhaps Gert and Gustov are misfits, outsiders. The music especially the sad cello at times plays out their misfortune. Grimm didn't come to mind at all when I acted the role. More how I imagined Gert to be and felt about him. **Woodenhead** has the sad beautiful qualities that we all appreciate and feel at times. It's also a bit of escapism from the mundane.

End.

“Habicht can work magic with \$30,000, we can't wait to see what he'd do with real money to play with on screen.” -Janet McAllistar, NZOOM.COM

Big Say In Film Success.

THE voice of former Martinborough school girl Mardi Potter is wowing International film festival audiences in the dark fairy tale *Woodenhead*, which premiered in Auckland this week.

Woodenhead is the story of Gert, a rubbish dump hand who considers himself to be the "luckiest man under the sun". Potter, who attended Martinborough Primary School and then Kuranui College, stars vocally as the voice of the female lead character Plum. The beautiful Plum is the daughter of the dump boss who has entrusted Gert with the task of escorting her to her wedding. *Woodenhead* is described as a dark Germanic style fairytale with a New Zealand backdrop, reflecting the background of film maker Florian Habicht who was born in Berlin and raised in the Bay of Islands. The film's premiere in Auckland was a sell-out.

Habicht reversed the usual movie-making process, recording the soundtrack first with trained musicians, including Potter, then shooting the film with the actors. Potter's vocal performance has been described as "perfect" by reviewers and she says she had a good time making the film.

Woodenhead plots the journey of Gert and Plum, which starts off well enough until the inevitable obstacles present themselves along with a variety of skewed characters including an escaped circus strong man, a lunatic tramp and a circus ring master.

Potter's parents live in Martinborough. Her father David is a TV/film producer and organic farmer and mother Jancis a music teacher and current head of music at Wairarapa College. She began playing piano long before she started school, taking formal lessons from her mum when she was 5 and also learnt violin. Following college she completed a two year Diploma of Performing Arts in Hawke's Bay.

Potter says she is pleased with the local reaction to the film and says although it is experimental unlike some of its peers doesn't alienate the audience.

As well as being heard as Plum's voice Potter also makes a cameo in the film as a gum-chewing waitress. "I'd been chewing on gum for the scene where the waitress is to blow bubbles but the gum had lost all of its elasticity, it was like trying to blow up a hot water bottle," she says. "I wasn't happy with the bubbles, but the wisdom on set was that the strained facial expressions were right, so that was that"

Wairarapa News 19 July 2003 By SEAN HOSKINS

WOODENHEAD

Gert
Plum
Gert's vocals
Plum's vocals
Goerdel
Goerdel's vocals & radio DJ
Gustav the Strongman
Hugo
The Tramp
Tramps Vocals
Narrator
Circus Ringmaster
Waitress at Caravan
Waitress'es vocals
Evil child vandal (girl)
Evil child vandal (boy)
Dancers

Circus dancers choreography
The talented Anala
Accordion Player
Circus Dog
Tuba Player

Production Manager
Catering
Sound Engineer
Sound Design & mix
Art Director
Director of Photography
Camera Operator
Tattoo artist
Still photographer
Original Music
Additional music by
Animal trainer
Vehicle Mechanic

Creative consultants

Writer, director, producer

CAST:

Nicholas Butler
Teresa Peters
Steve Abel
Mardi Potter
Tony Bishop
Lutz Halbhubner
Matthew Sunderland
Mr Warwick Broadhead
David Hornblow
Matthew Sunderland
Margaret Mary Hollins
Henry Lee
Mardi Potter
Vanessa Rhodes
Breeze
William Stanners
Jaqueline Wilson
Kerryn McMurdo
Alexa Wilson
Jaqueline Wilson
Georgie Hill
Florian Habicht
Teresa Peters
Killer Ray

CREW :

Prue Cunningham
Christine Habicht
Jeffrey Holdaway
Marc Hesterman, Florian Habicht.
Teresa Peters
Christopher Pryor
Florian Habicht
Samantha Mitchell
Frank Habicht
Marc Chesterman
Steve Abel, Mardi Potter & Peaches
Frankie
Ben Haretuku

Teresa Peters
Gregory King
Peter Odonoghue

Florian Habicht

Funded by the Creative New Zealand Screen Innovation fund.
A partnership between Creative New Zealand and the NZ Film Commission.

Woodenhead poster designed by Teresa Peters.

Introducing Team Woodenhead...

Florian has a like-minded, talented and totally committed team without which – the projects would never evolve. Everybody feels at home on a Florian Habicht film set. It is a 'whanau' rather than a contest for ego's. There is a sense of harmony and everyone is working for the love of the project and not the paycheck at the end of the week. It is this atmosphere that allows performers to be totally free and often 'real' behind the camera.

And it is this kind of film making that Habicht is trying to promote.

Teresa Peters.

Art Director and female lead 'Plum.'

Since graduating from the Elam School of Fine Arts in 2001, Teresa Peters has been an active participant in the New Zealand Arts. Based in Auckland, her style has been described as free, gutsy and intuitive. Peters has never been dictated by the use of a single medium. In 1998 she was painting murals. In 1999 drawings and installations. In 2001 two of her paintings featured in the *Waikato Contemporary Art award*. Other exhibitions include 'G.L.O.R.I.A.' 2000 at *Saint Agatha Gallery* and 'All The Better To Eat You With' a collaboration with Florian Habicht in 2001. Teresa played 'Donna' in Florian's 16mm short 'Liebestraume.' 1997

Nicholas Butler

Woodenhead's male lead 'Gert.' The luckiest man under the sun.

Nicholas Butler is a B.F.A graduate (majoring in painting) from the *Elam School of Fine Arts* (Auckland University). His interests and passions include the environment and the arts. A highlight has been spending time in Israel and Egypt exploring, discovering and visiting relatives. He featured in "*Strange Man Celebrations*" (1996) and as the male lead in "*Der Fisch*" (2001), both very odd films by Florian Habicht. "Great moments are those in life or art when something magical, very beautiful happens. Enjoying and savouring those moments is what it is all about."

Georgie Hill

Costume Designer and Woodenhead's 'The Talented Anala.'

Georgie Hill was born in Auckland, New Zealand in 1979. With a love of the colour red and an obsession with Bob Dylan and 1960's style, she graduated from Elam School of Fine Arts with a B.F.A in the year of 2001. Georgie is the co-founder, co-editor of red hot new magazine 'FOXYMORON', which first hit the streets to resounding applause in march 2003. Georgie is also one part of the elusive musical threesome 'The Harlots', who have been described as a future-gothic electro band.

Warwick Broadhead

Woodenhead's 'Hugo.' Plums father and the dump boss.

Mr Warwick Broadhead was born in 1944 in the year of the Monkey. He has written, acted, directed and produced over sixty performances. He has performed throughout New Zealand in different venues including forests, parks, railway stations, warehouses and on the water. He is 'a master of non verbal shoe string theatre.'(Listener 2003)

Warwick has lived in Japan, Australia, Fiji, England, Africa, America, Mexico and Arctic. He has worked with many leading visual artists. He is currently doing solo performances of '*The Selfish Giant*' and '*The Hunting of the Snark.*'

In his early day's (mid twenties) Warwick performed in Sanfransisco. He was in a controversial theatre group called '*The Angels of Light.*' 'They would dress up all over the place, try new things', and were famous for their 'fairytale gender-fuck.'

Tony Bishop

Woodenhead's manservant 'Goerdel.' The fastest, most sly and cleverest man in Woodland.

Tony Bishop is a decendant from English gypsies who migrated to New Zealand seeking a better life. He was raised on various farming areas in the north island, and attended twenty different schools. Enduring a love of nature, the land and people, incompassed with a shy personality led to recording from memory and observation.

Upon leaving school at the age of fifteen, Tony worked in farming, then attended the *Elam School Fine Arts* majoring in photography.

Later working as a freelance magazine photographer before going overseas.

After studying clown in Australia, Tony returned to New Zealand to work in the film industries. Roles included acting & art directing for tvc's, dramas and features. Cult favourites were '*Lustrous Energies*' (chicken thief role) and Habicht's '*Liebestraume*' (Drunken Policeman role.)

Tony Bishop now lives in a small remote south island town and is a folk art painter. Recording his rural experiences for prosperity. His constant companion and spiritual guide is his dog Almo ,a small pitball terrier - a fearless killer of small vermin.

Christopher Pryor

Woodenhead's director of Photography.

Christopher Pryor has a background as a stills photographer. His work has been exhibited and appeared in numerous publications. He met Mr Habicht while studying engineering at the Auckland University. Since then they have collaborated extensively. Chris also co-edited *Woodenhead*. He has been involved in shooting for the on-going documentary project '*Kaikohe Demolition*.' (From which the photo essay 'Rage Racers' was published in *Pavement Magazine* Oct/Nov 2001.)

Woodenhead saw Chris reunited with other friends and collaborators. In 1997, Chris composed the music for Jaqueline Wilson's (Woodenhead Performer) *Cathonian Gift*. Chris also shot the video component for Warwick Broadhead's *The Selfish Giant*. (2001.)

Most recently he directed the photography for Prue Cunningham's short film *Hole* starring David Hornblow.

In 1988, Chris was the St Andrews Intermediate School Frisbee Champion. *Woodenhead* is his first grimm musical fairytale.

Steve Abel

Performer/writer Hospice for Destitute Lovers and Gert's vocals..

Abel is an Auckland born musician and ecologist. He has spent his 33 years roving a ramshackle planet, writing and singing songs of longing and railing against those that wreck nature.

Abel welcomed the opportunity to contribute his song *Hospice For Destitute Lovers* to the brilliant soundtrack of Habicht's *Woodenhead*, and further, to be the voice of the films heroic dump hand on his journey through the mud, trash and despair of love in the Grim Northland fairytale.

Abel's acting background is in a decade of amateur theatre that begun as a ten year old child. Abel works fulltime at *Greenpeace*, performs music regularly in Auckland and is due to make his debut release of original songs recorded earlier this year with a composite band of all-stars including Geoff Maddock and Kirsten Morelle of *Goldenhorse*, Gareth Thomas of *Goodshirt* and members of other Auckland band *Pluto*.

Abel's songs have appeared in film soundtracks before including *Morag Brownlie's* short film in last years International Film Festival but *Woodenhead* represents his first contribution to a feature film.

Jaqueline Wilson

Woodenhead Circus performer and choreography.

Jacqueline trained for thirteen years in highland dancing before actively following an interest in contemporary dance.

She went on to further study at The Performing Arts School, and in her second year, worked as understudy for Brian Carbee's *Jump Giants in Bedrock*, (1993), before being invited to the United Kingdom by Carol Brown to work on Brown's post-doctorate piece *Bloodsongs*, (1994).

After touring Surrey she developed an interest in time-based arts while working for Live Art Magazine in London and was stimulated to produce *Phenylalanine*, (1994), which she performed in London and reworked under a new title, *Cathonian Gift*, (1996), in New Zealand. Parts of this piece appear in Florian Habicht's feature film *Liebesträume*, (1999).

A course of circumstances led to two years retreat in the Hawkes Bay where she was fulltime caregiving for a tetraplegic and researching for *automaton* (winner Best Sound Design and nominee for Most Original Production 1999 Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards), which was performed for the 1999 STAB season at Bats Theatre in Wellington.

A move back to Auckland in 2001 has seen her working with Florian Habicht on his second feature film *Woodenhead*. She is now embarking on the second phase of *Automaton*.

Mardi Potter.

Voice for Plum & Waitress Cameo. Composer and performer, Nothing Sensible.

Mardi Potter was born into a performance family: her mother a musician, conductor, and teacher, father a TV/film producer and organic farmer, and brother a musician and international entertainer. Mardi has been at the piano since her first steps, with a sense for music born of her parents influence. Potter began her work in performance in Wellington, after the requisite drama school grind, acting several roles over four years with Wellington's BATS theatre, as well as roles in short films. As a singer/songwriter Mardi has performed to wide acclaim, billing with the likes of Fur Patrol, Pacifier, and Cinematic.

Moving to Auckland in 2001, Mardi has concentrated on her work composing and recording a music which has been described variously as '..beautiful..', '..haunting..', '..lyrical..', and '..deeply affecting..'.
In early 2001 she first met Florian Habicht, and soon conditions were set for their inevitable collaboration, culminating in Potter's breathing life into Woodenhead's female protagonist, Plum. The film also includes her a capella composition 'Nothing Sensible'.

Currently Mardi can be found working at her Epsom studio, composing and recording. On clear nights when not sweating over a hot stove, Mardi can be found freezing under a large telescope.

Prue Cunningham

Woodenheads production manager.

Prue is a film-maker, art educator and art writer based in Auckland. Prue graduated from Elam School of Fine Arts in 2001. She has directed a number of short films including *Conversation* (2001), which has screened in various Auckland short film programmes.

Prue has worked in film and video production in a variety of capacities, including a guest tutorship at Whitecliffe College of Arts and Design. *Woodenhead* was Prue's debut as Production Manager.

David Hornblow

The tramp.

David is also an internationally published poet, featuring in the contemporary anthology of poetry *Short Fuse* (2002, Ratapallax Press, NY). He has performed his poetry in venues around Australasia, including scripting and performing a one man show, *Expat*, at the Sydney and Melbourne Fringe Festivals in 1998.

After meeting on the set of *Woodenhead*, Prue and David are now in love and expecting their first baby in August.

Kerryn McMurdo

Woodenhead Circus dancer...

Kerryn graduated from Auckland's School of Performing & Screen Arts at Unitec in 2000 with a BPSA in Contemporary Dance and from Wellington Performing Arts Centre in 1997, with a Certificate of Contemporary Dance. In 2001 Kerryn also obtained a Certificate of Proficiency for *Cunningham Technique* at *the School of Creative and Performing Arts, University of Auckland*. Since then Kerryn has choreographed, performed and screened work in theatres, galleries and cafes for arts and cultural festivals and independent shows in Auckland, Hamilton and Wellington.

Kerryn is an emerging intercultural and experimental dance/ performance, video and installation artist and works with the concepts of cultural identity and dislocation.

Solo performances include - *Absent Torna/Seed of Desire, What Is Seen What Is Unseen what is to be revealed*, and most recently *Skeletal Precipice*. Video works include - *Voy, Private Slide*

Killer Ray

Killer Rays music features in Woodenhead. He also has a cameo role in the Grimm Brothers Circus opening credits.

They call him Killer Ray, the Jazz Cowboy of Auckland, mixing it up with Jazz, Rap, blues, bebop, and scat vocals.

Since becoming Killer Ray, he has been performing at some of the best known night clubs and wearing a variety of costumes to go with his masked persona and his beautiful Marilyn Monroe look-alike models.

Killer Ray is a solo act scatting and rapping over his keyboard improvisations and mixing in modern stuff like hip hop, rap, techno, house, jungle and drum and bass dance music.

Killer Ray has been a guest on Nightline and Max TV Chat Show, was the subject of Florian Habichts film '*Liebestraume- the Absurd Dreams of Killer Ray.*' He performed at the *Big Day Out* and has sent his music video to the *Late Night David Letterman Show* in NYC.

Check out the Godfather of hip and cool music soon.

Killer Ray is seventy four years of age and is a graduate of the *Elam School of Fine Arts.*

Margaret-Mary Hollins

Woodenhead's narrator.

Margaret-Mary is a professional actor of 18 years, who started her training with Sydney Acting School – Dip. Acting. Later wanting a broader theatre spectrum she studied with Ecole Philippe Gaulier - Melodrama, Clowning, Shakespeare, Chekhov, Writing & Directing in London and City & Guilds of London and most recently trained with Estill Voice Training Systems. She works in theatre as an actor, writer, producer, director and tutor. Margaret-Mary co-founded Pandemonium - theatre that moves in 2002. She recently directed the critically acclaimed 'Beautiful Losers' and will be directing 'Macbeth' in August of 2003. This is her second involvement in a Florian Habicht film and loves working with a film director "who can make a potato look and feel astounding."

Alexa Wilson

Woodenhead Circus Performer.

Alexa Wilson is an Auckland based freelance exhibitionist of ideas delivered through performance which is interdisciplinary, though movement based. She has been a puppet in the dance works of Douglas Wright, Malia Johnston, Curve, Mark Harvey and danced collaboratively with difficult company in 'kill/dance' in N.Z and Australia since 2000, when unleashed from Unitec's Performing and Screen arts school. Her experimental works 'save/dance', 'Lab', 'Noah's Artifice' and 'N/A: epoch' have been performed in theatres, galleries, studios, cafes, bars throughout Auckland and some in Wellington and Melbourne, with minimal funding or sponsorship. She has a B.A in Film

and Women's Studies and teaches film theory at M.I.T. She likes to write and is inspired by text, film, art and dance from the heart and mind and has yet to engage with the spirit in an integrated way. For now paradox is an uneasy friend and her work a shadow to the world.

Matthew Sunderland

Woodenhead's 'Gustov the Circus Strongman.' Gustov escaped the circus to find himself a beautiful bride. Matt also performs the vocals for the tramp (played by David Hornblow.)

A graduate of *Toi Whakaari New Zealand Drama School*, Matthew has appeared in numerous roles on the Auckland stage, including 'Eddie Fool for Love', 'Begbie in Trainspotting', and 'Soldier' in Sarah Kane's controversial play 'Blasted.' Matthew has appeared in three other feature films. 'Absent Without Leave', 'Desperate Remedies' and most recently 'Christmas' a digi feature by Gregory King.

He has also appeared in numerous short films, including Greg Kings 'Pop' winner of best video at the *Melbourne International Film Festival*.

Jeffrey Holdaway

Woodenheads Audio Recordist / Engineer

Jeffrey is a filmmaker and audio engineer based in Auckland, New Zealand. He has been making films for over ten years and during that time has made a gradual transition from shooting the visuals to recording, inventing and mixing the sounds. He trained at AUT in Visual Arts (filmmaking) graduating in 1996, later going on to study Audio Engineering and Sound Design at MAINZ and Auckland University.

He is a member of the electronic art pop group Dr Peril and also records and produces for other Auckland bands. Jeffrey has been working with Florian since recording and mixing the sound for Liebestraume in 1998.

"Woodenhead gave me freedom I never had before when recording sound for film. Usually I'm compromising between unwanted location sounds and camera noise, restricted with microphones designed to filter out these extra sounds. Recording the audio before we began shooting allowed me to concentrate solely on capturing the actor's performance with a much higher quality than I would be able to achieve on set."

Jeffrey is currently working with a variety of directors recording and producing audio for documentaries, and short films. The documentary "Kaikohe Demolition" he has worked on with Florian is due for release later this year.

Frank Habicht

Woodenhead's Stills Photographer

Frank Habicht, a Hamburg born photographer of international repute, spent several decades working in London, Paris and Berlin as well as exhibiting worldwide.

His photography has featured in many magazines and journals including "Die Welt", "Twen", "US Camera:", "Esquire" and the "Guardian".

He has worked as a stills photographer for various film directors/producers including Roman Polanski, Jules Dassin and Bryan Forbes.

His book "Young London", a social document on London's youth, was published in the late sixties.

Another photographic book, "In The Sixties" (Tandem Press & Axis Publishing London 1997), juxtaposed those who achieved international fame with the unnamed, not recorded in history books.

After extensive traveling he and his family made their permanent home in New Zealand where he is fascinated by the combination of light and what he sees as a unique natural environment.

His recent work includes an acclaimed satirical pictorial on New Zealand's Bay of Islands: "Where The Sunday Grass is Greener". Another pictorial on the Bay of Islands: "A Paradise found" was published in 2000.

Frank says his main concern in photography is the process of communication to attempt to keep a situation alive by fusing observer and observed.

Christine Habicht

Woodenhead's caterer

Austrian born Christine is Florian's and Sebastian's proud mother. She thoroughly enjoyed to be with and spoil the entire dedicated and hardworking crew with sumptuous and innovative food. Once reborn Christine will run her own travelling catering business for filmmakers on a shoestring.

William Stanners

Woodenhead evil child vandal...

Mischief personified! William likes to live on the edge - from the day of his birth when he squirmed out of the midwife's hands to fall into the bath to smashing his father's brand new quad bike into the back of his mother's car at the age of two and a half. When William was asked to be in a movie and trash a car he jumped at the chance and enjoyed every moment of his days 'on-set'. Today William loves numbers, computers, his go-cart and football. He says he's going to be an All Black. And who knows? Because with William - anything's possible!

THE PACKAGE-SEPT '03 By D.C Holmes
Various Artists
Independent

The Woodenhead soundtrack weaves a story all on its own. Its weird and varied soundscapes amount to a beautiful range of sonic textures. If you are searching for something a little surprising but downbeat, this could be it.

The film score is predominantly written by Marc Chesterman, an established sound technician and composer of film and theatrical audio accompaniment. He is joined by a variety of interesting and experienced performers. Cellist Edward Hanfling plays beautifully throughout, is reminiscent at times of Kim Hiorthay's wonderful album 'Hei', and is complemented by violinist Li Ming Hu on track four.

'Goerdel' gives us an intense drum and bass excursion, which seems to break the continuity a little. It imposes the eerie darker side of the film's soundtrack. In its own way Woodenhead can be considered a genuinely artistic soundtrack- and not merely a compilation of bands collected together to sell the movie- or provide excessive merchandise. The voice samples from the movie were the only extraneous element for me.

My favourite, was a track called 'Trumpet Song' which features a rich meandering melody. But there was also the exceptional 'Plum and Gert Duet' -a sensuous love song- where Mardi Potter's vocals render a delicate melancholy. Older Wellington listeners may recognise Potter's singing from the days of the now defunct pop-band Beaker.

The Woodenhead soundtrack would be lovely to play to your kids, or put on for an evening at home- because after the initial weirdness wears off- the 24 tracks meld into an endearing and beautiful narrative song cycle that provokes the imagination to fit a story to the music.

Various: Woodenhead soundtrack
NZ HERALD 18.09.2003 By GRAHAM REID

Florian Habicht's film Woodenhead is, by all accounts, an ambitious and different piece of work in the landscape of local movies. The soundtrack was created before the visuals - a collaboration between Habicht and composer Marc Chesterman - and in the movie characters "speak" their lines without opening their mouths. Not having seen the film - which was shown at the recent Auckland and Melbourne film festivals - means this paintbox of songs and dialogue (of what sounds like a bent fairytale) must be taken at face value. There's doubtless a strong synchronicity with the images because tracks such as the slightly eerie Maidenwood evoke a dark journey, the mournful cello on Tremolo creates a useful melancholy, and Forest suggests a bizarre circus which the narrative hints at.

The sounds range from quiet folk to disturbing electronica in the manner of early Foetus Productions (Goerdel) but because many of the tracks (such as the minimal percussion of Drums and Bass) obviously only make sense with the pictures, this is not a sonic play-let of the film. The narrative is not discernible but the gloomy, Mervyn Peake-like dialogue and occasional disconcerting pieces of music whet the appetite for what sounds like a slightly unnerving cult flick.

DOMINION MONDAY , 22 SEPTEMBER 2003
Woodenhead Soundtrack - Marc Chesterman
By JOHN KENNEDY

Aucklander Florian Habicht's movie Woodenhead was billed as a "grim musical fairy tale". Its timeless fantasia of a different kind of New Zealand turned heads at this year's film festivals.

The soundtrack is an aural postcard from Habicht's Woodland- "the most sparkling and shining village in the land". You can hear its gleaming fade in Lucky Star, which typifies the sense of mischief and wonder, reminiscent in places of Bjork.

Marc Chesterman's synthetic art pop creations are dotted amongst other sonic ephemera: dialogue from the film, electro-noise, environmental sound and lounge style instrumental contributions from various musicians he assembled. That's cabaret icon Killer Ray tinkling the keys on Hi De Hi De Ho and Auckland underground noise guru Paul Winstanley adding an edgy squall to Goerdel.

Chesterman's editing is spot on, capturing the essence of the film's tragi-comic narrative in a well-paced CD. File under NZ - unique.

RIP IT UP OCT '03

By D.O.B

Marc Chesterman
Woodenhead Soundtrack
Global Routes Music

Reversing the usual order, the soundtrack to Florian Habicht's offbeat NZ-film Woodenhead, including the dialogue, was recorded before the film was shot, and the film made to fit. There's a carnival flavour to the proceedings. Like most soundtracks the question is whether it can exist satisfyingly in its own right without the pictures. The answer is: almost. There are some lovely moments, especially the world-weary, beautiful sing-a-long of Hospice for Destitute Lovers that rounds out the movie. But the overall effect is of an intriguing invitation to experience the full visual and auditory performance.

REAL GROOVE OCT'03

Noisy Neighbours

By Brent Cardy

Film festival movie soundtracks can be some of the most rewarding discoveries, given the nature of the medium they accompany, and Berlin-born Florian Habicht's latest movie, Woodenhead, is no exception. Filmed in Northland, and subtitled, 'A Grimm Musical Fairytale', the movie melds a little of the macabre with a little carnival.

The film's soundtrack, Woodenhead (Independent), includes dialogue samples with each musical segment and the result is an artistic, surreal musical experience, which has an earthy acoustic ambience (in the spirit of the film). Primarily created by Marc Chesterman, from the exotic to the sensual, with cello, trumpet and accordion, the album is a world unto itself. Auckland identity Killer Ray, a previous Habicht short film subject, also makes an appearance in the movie and on the soundtrack.

Florian Habicht's contribution to New Zealand Cinema:

For the last six years, independent film maker Florian Habicht has been creating a force that contributes to counter balance the mainstream of the New Zealand screen industry. Habicht does not want his films to just tell a story. He uses the medium to explore the relationship between the 'real' in fantasy and fantasy in the documentary.

So far Habicht's diverse films have been screened in many parts of Aotearoa including Kerikeri, Auckland, Christchurch, Wanganui, Taranaki, Dunedin and Wellington. He already has a following in Auckland, and *Woodenhead* was incredibly well received at this year's Melbourne Film Festival. With more *Woodenhead* screenings in Europe, and the release of *'Kaikohe Demolition'* in early 2004, Florian plans to expand his international audience further.

Florian is a member of the "alternative" / "experimental" film-making community, yet it is his ambition to create films that are accessible to a wide audience.

'Woodenhead' 90 mins, is an innocent yet often dark and subversive musical fairytale. A 'Hansel and Gretel like' journey through New Zealand towns, bush and forest. Florian was interested in pushing the synergistic qualities of audio and picture. - The entire dialogue/soundtrack for *'Woodenhead'* was pre-recorded. The visuals were then shot to the soundtrack, reversing the usual priority that is given to pictures. This technique allowed *'Woodenhead'* to first purely focus on sound, and during shooting, focus entirely on the visual performances. Also enabling an extraordinary combination of actors, musicians and real personalities that would otherwise not be possible.

'Kaikohe Demolition' 80 mins, (in post production) is an intimate and 'poetic' portrayal of the Kaikohe Car Club's 'Soul Surviving' Demolition Derby. The film is likely to attract car lovers, Demo Derby fans, Kaikohe locals, Film-Festival movie go-ers, New Zealand television audiences and overseas people interested in seeing sides of Aotearoa where the tourist buses don't stop. Florian's camera has discovered a sub-culture unknown to even most New Zealanders.

Habicht is not trying to make New Zealand versions of Hollywood films, but rather 'cult' films that are totally unique to our country and the rest of the world.

Removing the boundaries between visual disciplines has been an ongoing passion (and income.) Florian created the video visuals for Douglas Wright's *'Inland'*, a New Zealand Festival 2001 production that mixed contemporary dance with video, music and performance.

Florian also assisted Warwick Broadhead with the video visuals for his performance *'The Selfish Giant'* that year.

'Liebesträume' - The Absurd Dreams of Killer Ray' 75mins, 1998 mixed documentary with fiction. The film follows Auckland Cult performer 'Killer Ray' to the streets of Bangkok, Thailand. When *'Liebestäume'* returned to the Rialto Cinema Auckland in September 2000, each screening was preceded by live jazz/rap performances by Killer Ray.

Creating feature films on shoestring budgets is not always easy. Florian's energy, enthusiasm and determination to see projects through to completion never runs out. He has a like-minded, talented and totally committed team without which - the projects would never evolve. Everybody feels at home on a Florian Habicht film set. It is a whanau rather than a contest for ego's. There is a sense of harmony and everyone is working for the love of the project and not the paycheck at the end of the week. It is this atmosphere that allows performers (like the Kaikohe Demolition drivers) to be totally free and 'real' behind the camera.

And it is this kind of film making that Habicht is trying to promote.