

THE DROVER'S WIFE

THE LEGEND OF MOLLY JOHNSON

DIRECTOR'S LOOKBOOK



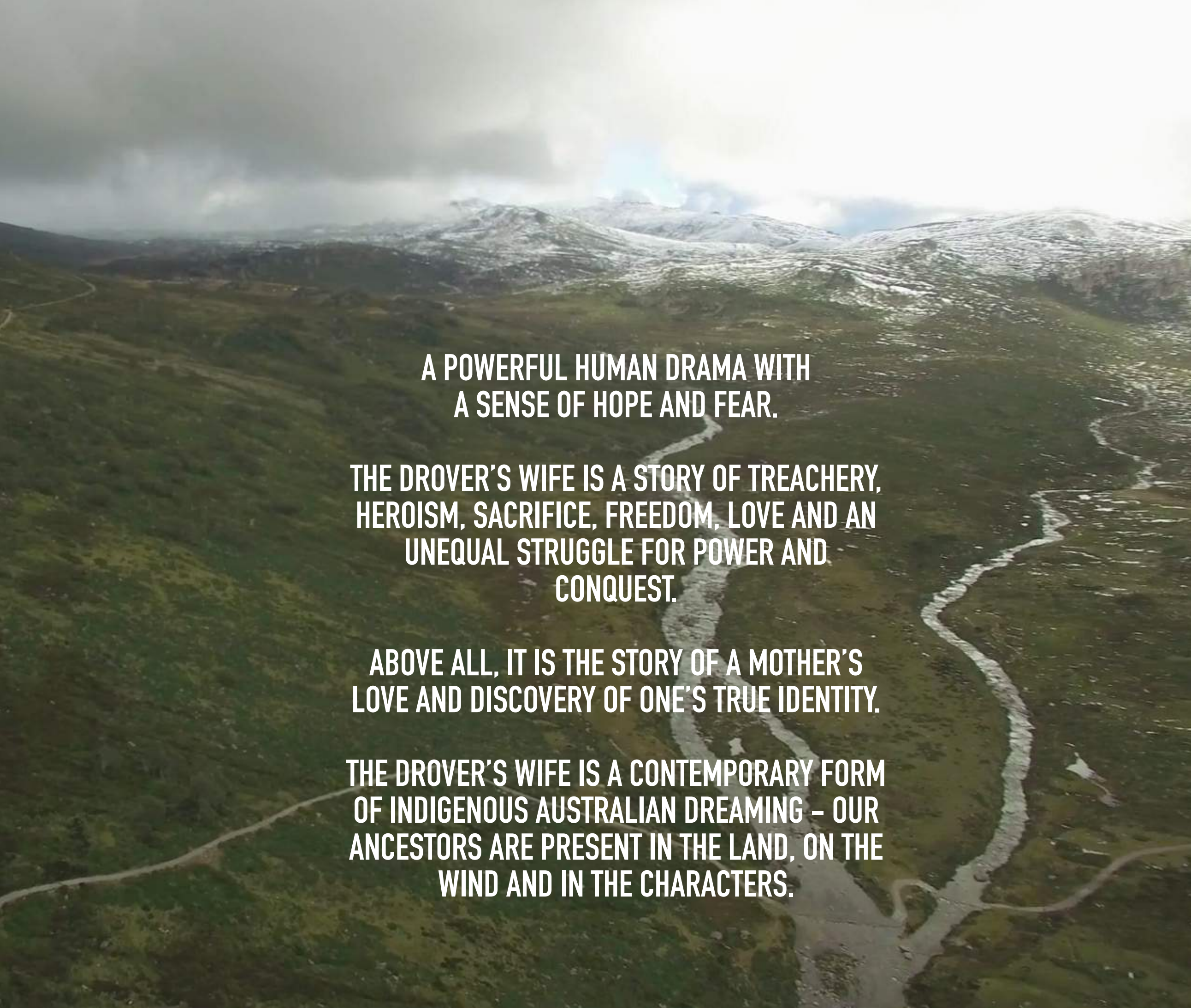
HELL HATH NO FURY LIKE A MOTHER SCORNE

A SEARING REIMAGINING
OF LEAH PURCELL'S THEATRICAL PRODUCTION
AND HENRY LAWSON'S CLASSIC SHORT STORY
SET AGAINST THE BREATHTAKING
SNOWY MOUNTAINS



A close-up, profile shot of a woman with dark, curly hair, looking down with a pained or distressed expression. She is wearing a brown, textured garment. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape.

LOVE
FAMILY
PROTECTION
SURVIVAL
WOMANHOOD
REVENGE
TRUTH

An aerial view of a vast, green landscape with a winding river or path. In the background, there are snow-capped mountains under a cloudy sky.

A POWERFUL HUMAN DRAMA WITH
A SENSE OF HOPE AND FEAR.

THE DROVER'S WIFE IS A STORY OF TREACHERY,
HEROISM, SACRIFICE, FREEDOM, LOVE AND AN
UNEQUAL STRUGGLE FOR POWER AND
CONQUEST.

ABOVE ALL, IT IS THE STORY OF A MOTHER'S
LOVE AND DISCOVERY OF ONE'S TRUE IDENTITY.

THE DROVER'S WIFE IS A CONTEMPORARY FORM
OF INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN DREAMING – OUR
ANCESTORS ARE PRESENT IN THE LAND, ON THE
WIND AND IN THE CHARACTERS.



CHARACTERS

MOLLY JOHNSON

LEAH PURCELL

Molly is a mother and the wife of a brutal, drover husband.

She lives for her children and when danger is upon them, Molly fights to protect to them.





YADAKA

ROB COLLINS

An Aboriginal man of grace, knowledge, courage and nobility. But when Yadaka must fight for his life, he will and he will do what is needed to survive.

SERGEANT NATE CLINTOFF

Englishman Nate was a soldier in the First Boar war. His war injury put him behind a desk and after 12 years this man of principle took up an offer to run a newly formed town in the Snowy Mountains.

LOUISA CLINTOFF

Loving wife and strong willed woman, Louisa is a writer and an advocate for women's rights. She is elated by her family's new life in Australia and thrilled, naively, to throw herself into life on the land.

DANNY JOHNSON

The oldest son and loyal protector of his mother, Molly. Still a child, Danny is wise beyond his years, burdened by knowledge and responsibility for his siblings.

ROBERT PARSEN

A loyal friend to Joe Johnson and a brilliant stockman. Parsen has a dark side that is brutal when exposed.

JOHN McPHARLEN

A stockman, McPharlen is not much more than a boy but he's a sexual deviant devoid of morals.

THOMAS McNEALY

Swagman. Rogue. Murderer. He hides behind the façade of his dirty gentleman's three piece suit in sole-less shoes.



SYNOPSIS

SNOWY MOUNTAINS.
ALPINE COUNTRY.
1893.

ON AN ISOLATED PROPERTY...



...Heavily pregnant MOLLY JOHNSON has a secret she must keep buried. She and her children struggle to survive the elements, hunger and a wild bullock.

Crack-shot Molly takes the bullock down and it becomes a blessing: food.



Drawn by the aroma of a roast, travel-weary strangers in-need Sergeant Nate Clintoff, his wife Louisa and their three-year-old son Samuel arrive on Molly's doorstep.

Molly learns the young English couple are the new law and order for the town of Everton.

Molly asks a favour and her children leave with the Clintoff's to stay with Father McGuiness and wife Miss Shirley in Everton, leaving Molly and oldest son Danny alone on the property.





After a bath at the hot springs to bring the baby on, Molly encounters an injured fugitive Aboriginal man in her front yard. His name is Yadaka.

A swagman appears. He tells of the murder of the influential Mrs Edwards and her children on the other side of the range. Yadaka sees the threatening swagman off.

Molly goes into labour and Yadaka helps her with the birth and burial of her still-born baby girl. He offers to bring fire-wood and level the mound under the woodpile if he can stay. Molly accepts but he must leave in two days.

Danny forms a bond with Yadaka. When he leaves for Everton to collect his siblings Yadaka gives Danny a hunting spear.



In town Clintoff asks Danny of his father's whereabouts as he's learned Joe Johnson didn't turn up for his drove. Clintoff sends his deputy Leslie to question Molly.

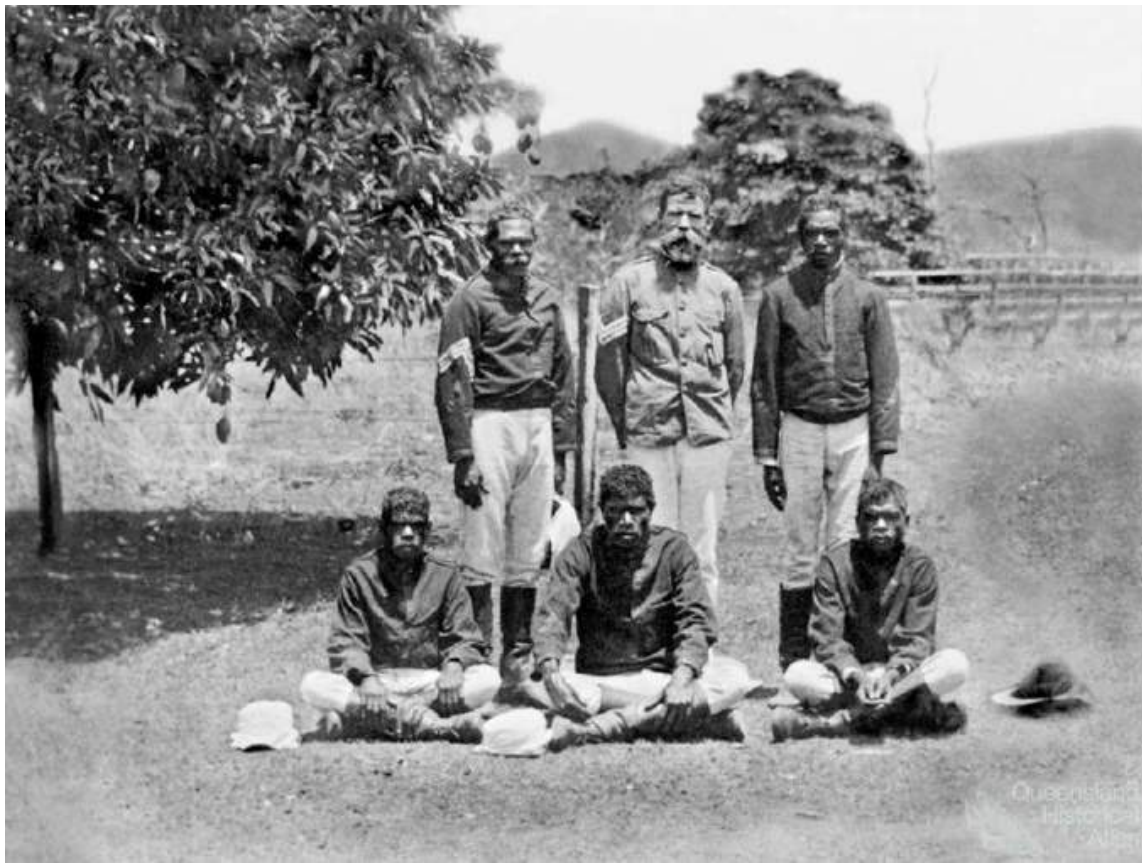
Yadaka and Molly grow close through sharing family stories. As Molly grooms his hair Yadaka tells her he's recognised her stories. Her mother was Aboriginal. Molly won't have it and they clash.



Trooper Leslie arrives and recognises Yadaka as wanted for the Edwards murder.

Molly refuses to go in for questioning and she shoots Leslie dead.

After Yadaka buries him, Molly reveals she buried her husband under the wood heap. Yadaka asks Molly to leave with him and she considers this.



They are interrupted by Robert Parsen and John McPharlen

- Ruthless brutal stockmen with no morals towards women and blacks. They have come out to see why their mate didn't make the drive.

Molly and Yadaka are no match for these monsters. Molly is beaten and raped and they string up Yadaka. Witness is Danny, by the snow gum, too shocked and afraid to move.

After they leave Danny tells Molly it's time for the truth. He saw her shoot his violent father for the love of her children. They cry and forgive then Danny tells Molly Miss Shirley called the children Quadroons. A word that will have them removed.

No one will take Molly's children.



With Molly’s rifle over her shoulder and killing spear in Danny’s hand they head out on horseback to save her children.

Molly ties up the McGuinnesses. She reclaims her children to head for a cave Yadaka had told her about, but at the edge of town, with escape so close, Molly sees John McPharlen coming from the brothel. She can’t help herself and confronts him. He taunts her and Molly castrates him. It begins to snow. Molly turns to leave but walks right into Sergeant Clintoff. Remorseful, her eyes flick in the direction her children have gone.

Her final plea: “Please, my children.” Nate is torn.



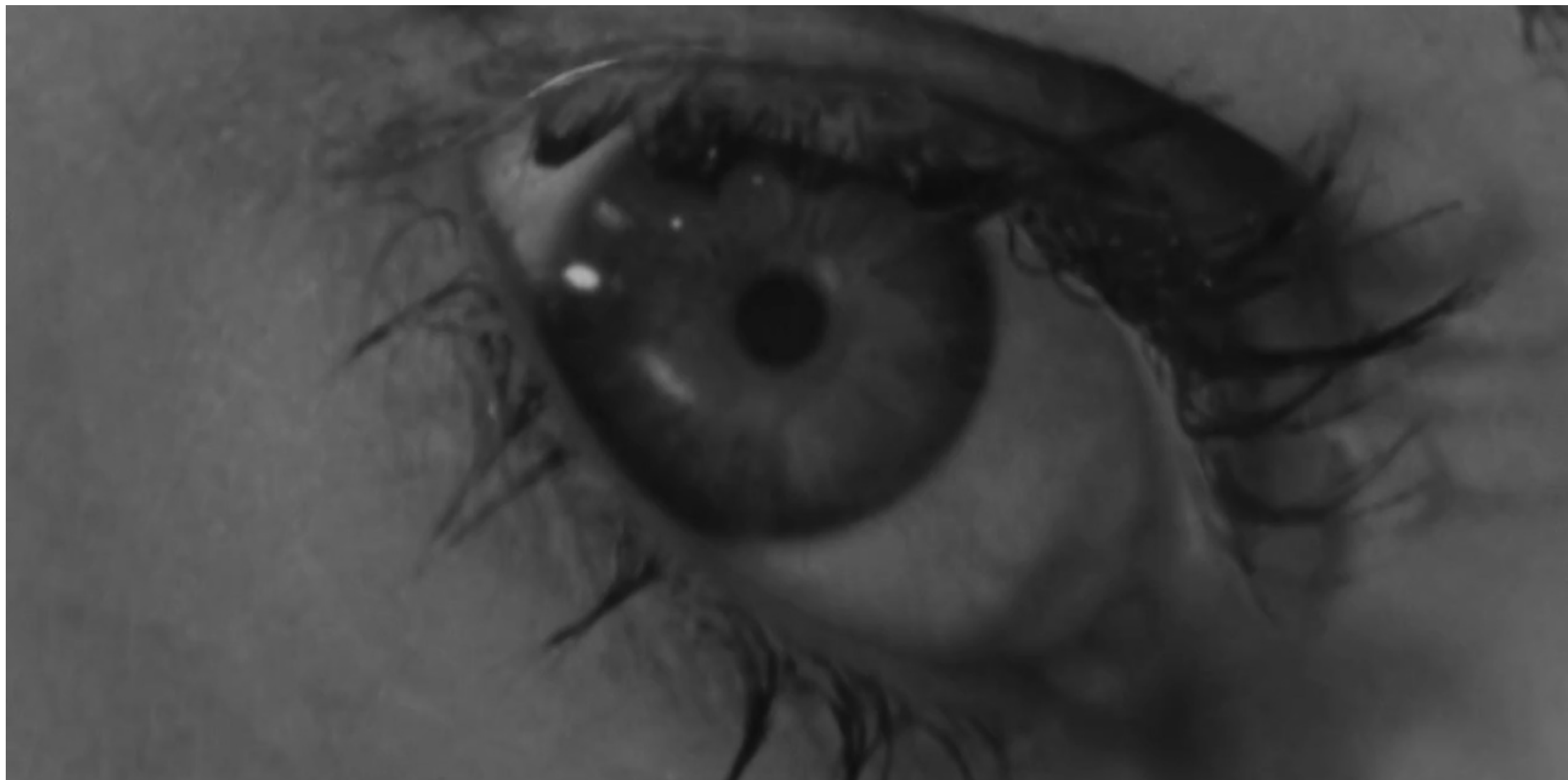
From the jail cell window, Molly looks out at the snow-covered land.

Nate asks where her children are. He wants to help them. Molly gives nothing away, knowing when they make it to the cave, they will have love and protection. Molly tells Louisa, Nate’s wife, a writer, that Molly can only hear her voice in her writing.

That Louisa needs to hear the voices of women who have suffered at the hands of their husbands. Louisa asks if she can hear Molly’s story. There isn’t much time. A promise from Louisa that the story Molly tells will be given to her children.

Molly opens up; doing so in the hope that her crimes will not overshadow her deep love for her children.





As Molly swings from the gallows, her children are dwarfed by snow covered mountains.

They search desperately for the cave that Yadaka described to Molly and she relayed to Danny.

They are exhausted, cold and hungry, the little girl on her oldest brother's back... but finally, they see the cave.

And in the Spring...

People.
Family.





LOCATION

A LAND OF LAWLESS BEAUTY . . .
ALL IMAGES TAKEN ON LOCATION IN THE SNOWY MOUNTAINS

















**ROUGH SKETCH
OF MOLLY'S SHANTY
BY PRODUCTION DESIGNER
SAM HOBBS**



CINEMATIC VISION

A SPECTACULAR, BOLD AND UNCOMPROMISING CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE.



The beauty and brutality of the story mirrors the landscape.

So too will the visuals capture the lyrical and primal beauty of the Snowy Mountains. The open plains, bursting with Spring wild flowers. The intimacy of the first snowfall. The deep snow blanketing the high country.

The film is shot primarily from Molly's perspective within her 'legend' narrative. As Danny is our voice through the film's book-ends we will show his POV during the pivotal events. To alleviate the violence of these moments we will be with Danny as he witnesses them.

Choosing a classical shooting style, we will use natural realism so as not to intrude on the story. The camera movement will amp up with the story and action.

Our initial thought is to shoot wide screen 2.40:1 using anamorphic lenses and we will review the aspect ratio closer to the shoot. Camera and lens selection choices include the Alexa 65 or the Panavision DXL2.

Alternatively, we might use anamorphic lenses on a super 35 sensor. This will be decided after testing and may well be a combination of formats to better suit the scenes and changing moods of the story.



THROUGH THE VISUALS I AM PLAYING WITH METAPHORS OF THE OPPRESSOR: THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE THAT SURROUND MOLLY'S LIFE AND SHAPE IT.

The environment, with its beauty and peril, is a character in the film. It is beautiful, but harsh, and we 'feel' the land.

The mammoth mountain range that soars over the family's shanty, the density of the scrub, the vastness of the plains and the changeable moods of Mother Nature.

Molly lives with danger surrounding her. She - and all the characters - are framed against the landscape or structures within it.











MOLLY FACES HUMAN THREATS AS WELL.

Her husband, his mates, Yadaka, the swagman, Nate Clintoff with his new law and order, Miss Shirley and Father McGuinness - people of size and power that Molly must endure and confront.

So, we will enhance the actors' body size and height with angles and lenses.

Drawing on classic Westerns as visual inspiration, we will use wide shots of the landscapes juxtaposed with intimate details of characters. The use of close ups will be limited to dramatic storytelling and framing of body language.

References include:
The Revenant, The Proposition, Psycho and The Hateful Eight.



A NOTE ON PALETTE:

Our muted palette will express the claustrophobic and hidden nature of Molly’s life and identity.

This palette will paint the detail of an ash frosting over olive green leaves of the undergrowth, the ghost white of the trunks of the snow gums and Mountain Ash trees and the browning foliage of the scrub country that surrounds Molly’s shanty.

See Frederick McCubbin’s paintings (right).



The muted palette will allow the natural light – and the light we create – to make for strong contrast and deep shadow.

At night, where the firelight and lamps provide safety and warmth, the darkness will be lit only by moonlight, giving the scene an almost monochrome look.



THE PALETTE WILL ALLOW US TO HIGHLIGHT ITEMS OF SIGNIFICANCE TO THE STORY.

OR COMPOSITIONAL ELEMENTS.

THE DRAMA WILL BE PUNCTUATED BY SCENERY ESTABLISHERS AND MACRO
CUT-A-WAYS OF NATURE.



AS WELL AS FEELING THE METAPHOR OF OPPRESSION AND MASCULINITY OF THE WORLD IN WHICH MOLLY LIVES, WE WILL FIND FEMININITY.

This comes from a splash of colour and light, utilising nature, like the palette of the colours found in the snow gum trunk when water is poured on it.





MAGIC REALISM & TIMELAPSE

Though the film is classical and realistic in approach, elements of magical realism will link the present to Molly’s awakening. A suggestion of a larger narrative at play that she is destined to learn. We will see this through the night sky and formations within the snow gum tree that stands as a sentinel to Molly’s shanty – reminding her (and us) that something is constantly watching over her.

This element is culturally appropriate to Blackfella storytelling and is intrinsic to the film.

We will use time lapse to achieve this spiritual element. The sky – day and night – will play a significant part, another character in nature. Time lapse will also depict the psychology of the landscape. For example, a storm brewing – danger is coming.

Renowned landscape photographer Murray Fredericks (SALT, David Attenborough wildlife documentaries, MYSTERY ROAD TV) has mastered time lapse technique. We will work with him to design and use time lapse sparingly to enhance the film and underline its spiritually.

- Potential uses for time lapse include:
- Set the mood through landscape and sky. Night sky and formations within Molly’s sentinel snow gum tree.
 - Accentuate key characters or significant stakes. On a wide shot of the Monaro Plains, subtle time lapse of cloud will sit over Parsen and McPharlen as they drive sheep to the sales, heightening the stakes.
 - Time pasting forward or back.
 - Scene transitions.





DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

PERSONAL INSIGHT

THE DROVER'S WIFE is based on my personal stories as a contemporary fair-skinned Aboriginal woman who grew up in the bush with Aboriginal Mission influences (stolen generations, Mission oppression, small town racist and biased mentality - both black and white) who now lives in the city.

A woman who was brought up by storytellers, within a culture where the tradition of storytelling is passed down and our histories are heard from the Black experience, not from white-washed history books.

As an Aboriginal director many of my ideas have contemporary black influences. I incorporate my own lived experience and those of my ancestors. Expressing what it means to be black within today's world through my work in film, television and theatre is vitally important to me. These are stories rarely considered. And they deserve consideration. Through my work, I seek to shine a light on the truth of most of our Australian Aboriginal population. The characters I bring to the screen are not stereotypical 'traditional looking' Australian Aboriginals. This is a deliberate choice to show both my own people and the wider community that we are as diverse in looks as we are in ways. Our traditions can be destroyed and our languages lost but our stories are ours to keep. Our storytelling lives in us still. And through the medium of film will live long and for all.

I believe it is vitally important that our stories are told by us, for us and about us and for all to see and connect with.

To reflect this storytelling practice, THE DROVER'S WIFE is a contemporary form of Dreaming, it's a journey that belongs to many and all lead to Molly Johnson. This Dreaming is a form of identity and cultural practise of ancient traditions and in The Drover's Wife: The Legend of Molly Johnson, this passing down of story is both evident and deliberate throughout the narrative.





HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

1975 - I have had this story embedded in me for 42 years. My mother would read and recite *The Drover's Wife* to me from when I was five years old. I connected to the story deeply as I saw myself as the oldest son of the Drover's wife. He helped his mother while his father, The Drover, was away working. I would stop my mother from telling the end of the story and finish it, with the famous last line, "Ma, I won't never go a drovin'."

2006 – While filming *Jindabyne* with Ray Lawrence, I would go for walks in the national parks around the Snowy Mountains on my days off. On one occasion I said to my partner, "We need to do something up here in the mountains. It's going to be *The Drover's Wife* and I'm going to be in it." I put that out there on Country and here we are...

2014 to 2016 - This period gave me the opportunity to start the research and writing process for *The Drover's Wife*, the play, with Belvoir Street Theatre. I was the recipient of a Balnaves Fellowship. This gave me financial support to write the play, which then became part of the research process for the film idea. We performed to a sold-out audience every night to standing ovations. Experiencing the reaction cemented my thoughts that this would make a great film. Each night after the performance, I would walk through the foyer and talk with the many women (and men) who stayed back to toast the women of the 1890's. I would talk to them about the idea of the film and it was enthusiastically received.

2017 to 2018 – After only 33 shows at Belvoir Street Theatre in Sydney the play went on an award-winning run during 2017: -

- 3 major awards at the Sydney Theatre Awards including Best Play and Best Script.
- 2 major awards at the Victorian Premiers Literary Awards; Best Play and the Prize for Literature.
- 3 major awards at the AWGIES including the Golden AWGIE and Best Play.
- Best Book awards at the NSW Premiers Literary Awards.
- 4 major awards at the Helpmann Awards including Best Play and Best Australian New Work.

2018 to 2019 - Financing and filming.



STORY AND AUDIENCE

THE DROVER'S WIFE: THE LEGEND OF MOLLY JOHNSON is an action packed, emotionally engaging, Australian Western revenge thriller. It will entertain and move people deeply as they connect to the truth in the writing and in the performances. The essence of Henry Lawson's classic short story entwines with factual insight from family diaries about my great grandfather to create a compelling and multilayered yarn.

At my film's core is a mother who will do anything for her children and a young boy who will stand by his mother, no matter what. It's about love, protection and the survival of family with a soul of ancient proportions.

The unique selling point for this film is that the protagonist is an Aboriginal woman with high calibre performance ability and the enduringly popular genre: revenge thriller. The story is intimate and also has an epic feel with a strong ensemble support cast which holds its own.

In this age of #gendermatters this is a timely, yet timeless film, written, directed and performed by a woman with a long and successful track record in performing and directing outstanding drama and inspired by her ancestors, her land. It's a story rich in themes and the mythology of generational Aboriginal story-telling which is exciting to bring to film and maybe the first attempt of consciously structuring a film to attempt this ancient practise: the oral tradition of passing on knowledge through story.

I chose the genre because it allowed me to depict the true nature of 1893 and to push the truth to its extreme in a deeply felt and cinematic way. If I, as an Aboriginal story-teller, can't tell my ancestors' stories truthfully then who can? This genre allows me the freedom to go there and I feel is the most powerful way to tell this story. I also recognise the commercial impact and the reach this story form has.

I feel there is a wide and varied audience for this film. This is a story with universal themes, giving us a national and international audience. The film has evolved from my multi award winning play, the reimagining of Henry Lawson's classic of the same name, that is now studied in High Schools around Australia (allowing a younger audience interest as well as readers of Henry Lawson).

There are also fans and followers of my works spanning 27 years in the Australian industry as an actor, writer, director and political activist for the Aboriginal Cause.

Marketwise, the extremely positive response to my screenplay and visual presentation by international distributors at the 2018 Cannes International Film Festival has also cemented my belief in my film and its potential to reach an international audience.

I am very confident that I will bring this film to fruition with my great team behind me: my producers, Bain Stewart (Oombarra Productions) David Jowsey and Greer Simpkin (Bunya Productions) and Alison Owen (Monumental Pictures).

My crew are also key: some relationships have spanned more than 20 years: my DOP Mark Wareham, 1st AD, Richard McGrath, editor Dany Cooper, other heads of department and my production designer, Sam Hobbs are collaborating with me to bring our film to fruition. I back them and myself 100%.

PROCESS

Since I am directing and acting in this film we will take a different approach in our pre-production. During April/May 2019 we will start a pre-pre-production where the heads of department will come together for a week and I will download my vision for TDWLMJ. During this week we will also broadly troubleshoot any issues that may present themselves.

We will also work through our second unit needs regarding scripted transition scenes of the landscape, and flora and fauna. We will map out the schedule for shooting the time lapse of the stars. In April/May there will be another recce with key creatives to finalise locations. This is necessary because when we are in pre-production majority of the locations will be under snow.

We will talk and work through the logistics of the script being achieved with me directing and acting. The main focus will be for our Production Designer, Sam Hobbs to get his head around the production and start on models. He and his team will work for another two weeks to create the models and then Sam will work a further week on finalising his design. This will allow us in our pre-production to be advanced in presentation to bring the rest of our crew up to speed quicker, alleviating some of the first week stress of pre, predominately on me.

During our pre-production, myself and Mark Wareham (DOP) will spend time preparing shot lists for every scene so when we are on set we have this as a foundation to work from and also to allow us to think quickly when circumstances arise on set i.e. to be prepared for challenges that the weather and the location may present.

This will allow me to have my nights to learn lines and sleep. At the end of each day or during set up times, where Mark is not needed, we will also look at what the next day's challenges or changes are and tweak the shot list accordingly.

I will have a stand-in double for blocking so I can see the blocking and finesse to get what we require. This must be an experienced, accomplished and reliable actor so the other actors feel comfortable and safe when working through the blocking.

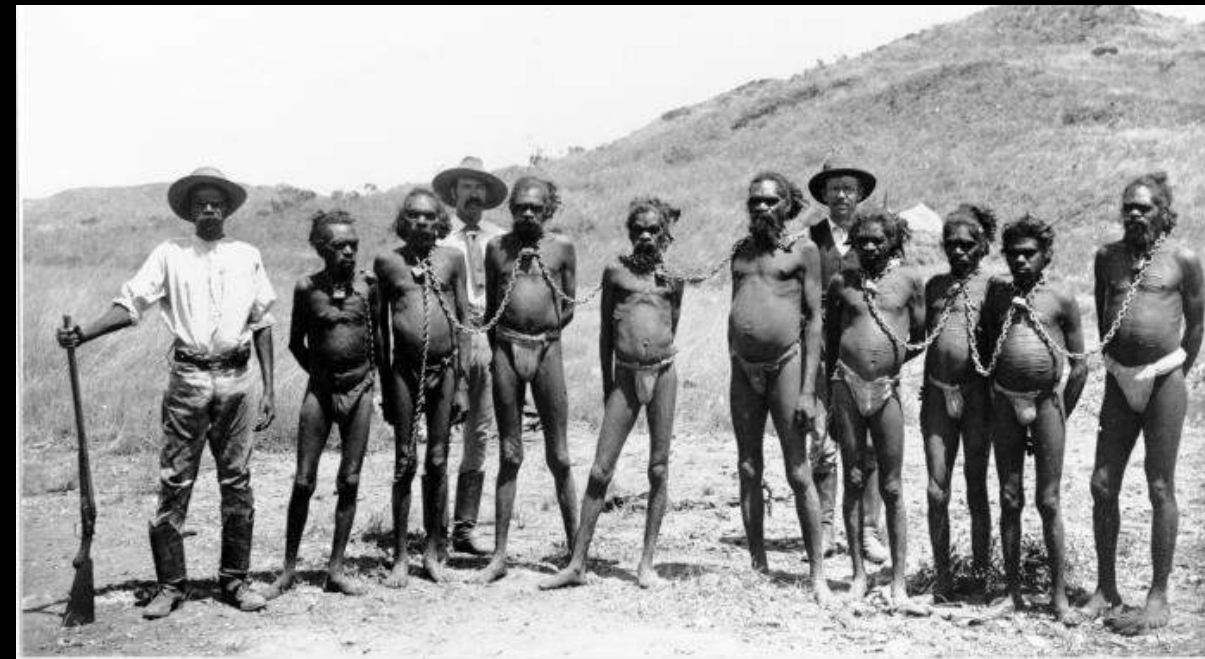
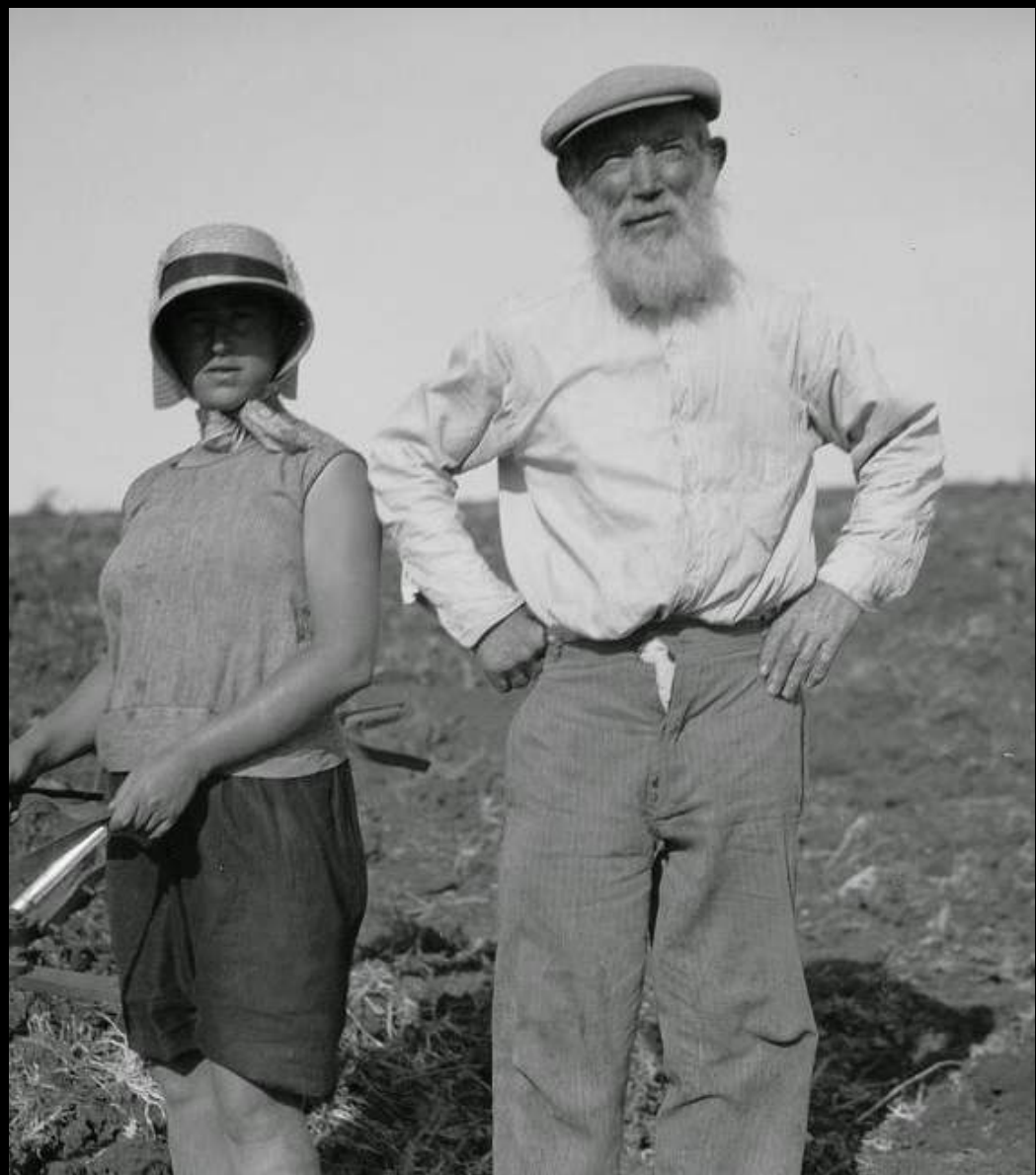
We hope to have an eight week shoot which I feel very comfortable with. I have surrounded myself with a very experienced team. Feeling well prepared in advance alleviates the stressful nights. I like to be very prepared and I have always applied that principal in my television directing and how I work generally.





VISUAL CHARACTERS & COMMUNITY





THE DAWN.

A Journal for Australian Women.

EDITED BY DORA FALCONER

VOL. I. No. 1.

SYDNEY, MAY 15, 1888.

PRICE, 3d.

About Ourselves.

"WOMAN is not uncompleted man, but diverse," says Tennyson, and being diverse why should she not have her journal in which her divergent hopes, aims, and opinions may have representation. Every eccentricity of belief, and every variety of bias in mankind allies itself with a printing-machine, and gets its singularities bruited about in type, but where is the printing-ink champion of mankind's better half? There has hitherto been no trumpet through which the concentrated voice of womankind could publish their grievances and their opinions. Men legislate on divorce, on hours of labor, and many another question intimately affecting women, but neither ask nor know the wishes of those whose lives and happiness are most concerned. Many a tale might be told by women, and many a useful hint given, even to the omniscient male, which would materially strengthen and guide the hands of law-makers and benefactors aspiring to be just and generous to weak and unrepresented womankind.

Here then is DAWN, the Australian Woman's Journal and mouthpiece—





SOUNDSCAPE & MUSIC

USING THE RAW SOUNDS OF NATURE, THE FEMININITY AND MASCULINITY OF THE LAND... WITH A BLEND OF ANCIENT INSTRUMENTS AND VOCALS FROM SCOTLAND AND ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA.

The music and soundscape will not intrude or dominate the visuals and performances but will help evoke and stir the viewer's subconscious so it is felt as much as heard.

The composition will be part of the whole and will also stand alone as another form of the telling of the story. Creating this will be a nurtured and informed process.

I will find the feel of the music and its rhythm on location during filming. I'll be influenced by what nature is doing around us, by the musicality in the writing, in my direction and in the performances of the actors. These will shape the essence of the piece.

In saying that, I have many thoughts already. An original music score will be created. I want to find a sound we can say is our very own Australian Western theme and I will be exploring this with the composer. The score will be fused with Indigenous female and male vocals complemented with orchestral and contemporary instrumental sounds.

We will play with the temperament of the narrative. The action sequences will be represented accordingly, as will moments of repose and peace that might just require a single instrument or nothing but the continuous hum of nature. I know the soundscape will have nature's sounds:

The wind in tree tops, horse hooves galloping over ground, the lull of sheep. I can hear the raw voice of Molly and Danny singing at the grave side and the vibrating hum of the dragon fly wings; at times these sounds stand alone, at others they will be accompanied by original score.

The Aboriginal component is, of course, a great influence. I hear voices in the soundscape. Songmen with the soft drones of the Yidaki, clap sticks, the rattle of boomerangs, the drum beat of possum hide stretched across the laps of the women, a steel slide guitar cutting through.

Aboriginal male voices dominate as Yadaka is beaten and hung – the cry of the ancestors. I am considering song men Yullamundi Richard Green, Matthew Doyle or Djakapurra Munyarryun. Yellamundi is a song man from the East coast, which is traditional and culturally fitting for the film.

The throaty/guttural masculine sounds of the song man resonating through the mountains with the full moon high in the night sky.

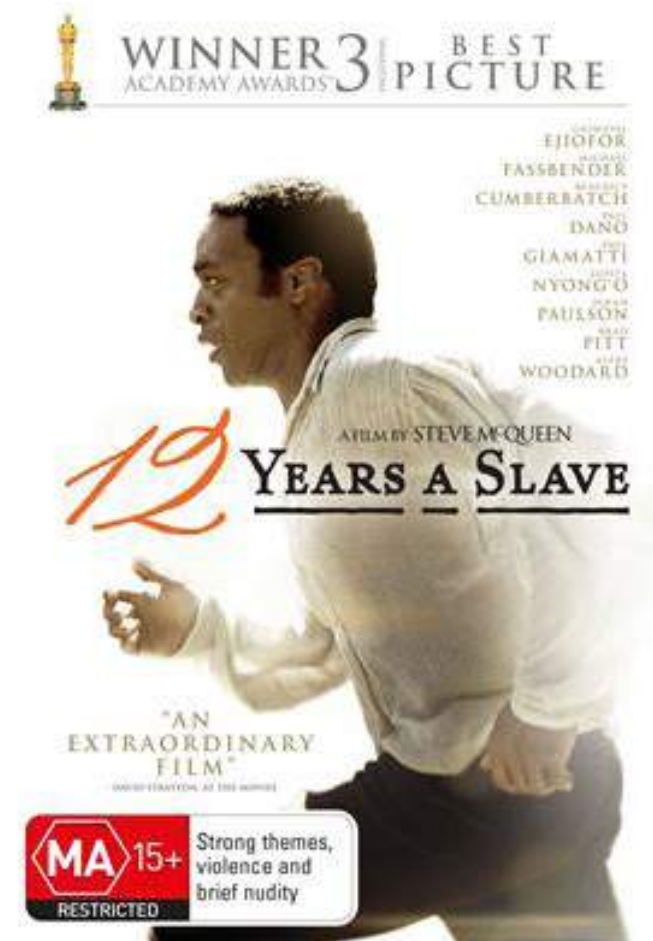
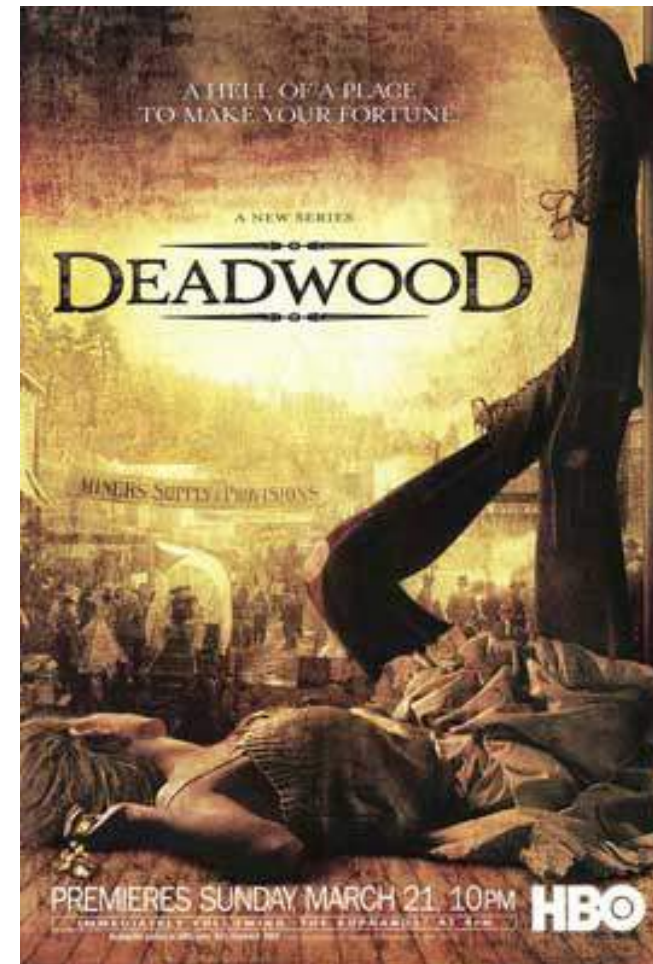
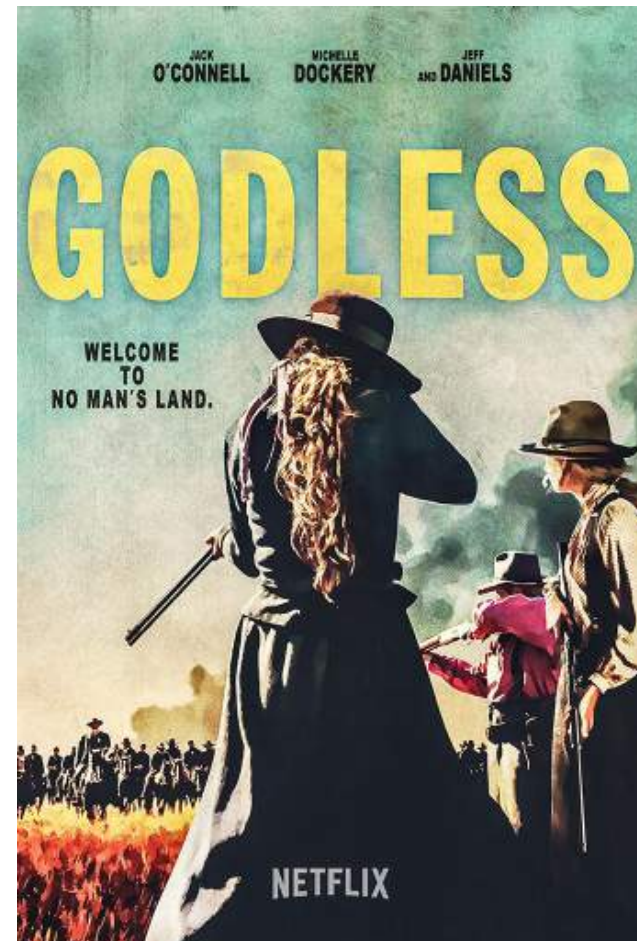
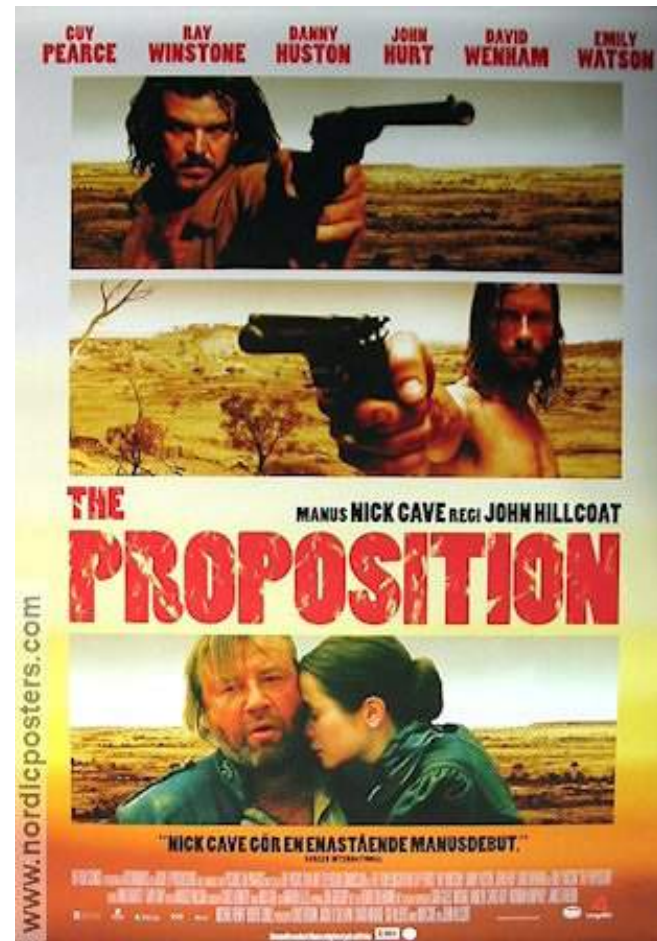
A female vocal presence will represent Black Mary and Molly. A melodic spiritual influence suggests something on the wind that says ancestors are present. There could be a Celtic flute influence, which comes from Molly Johnson's father, Jock Stewart.

The soundtrack will be created at Soundfirm utilising Australia's only DolbyAtmos Mixing and Mastering stage.



CINEMATIC INFLUENCES

(A SHORT SELECTION)





THE DROVER'S WIFE

A MODERN AUSTRALIAN CLASSIC

In September 2016 the cultural landscape in Australia changed and a modern Australian classic emerged when the stage-play, The Drover's Wife written and starring Leah Purcell opened at Belvoir St Theatre in Sydney, Australia.

Since that initial season at Belvoir and its 33 show run The Drover's Wife play has gone on to win every major award it's been nominated for including; 2017 VIC Premiers Literary Awards for "Prize for Literature" & "Best Play"; NSW Premiers Literature Awards for "Nick Enright Award for Best Play" and "Book of the Year"; 2017 Helpmann Awards for "Best New Australian Work" and "Best Play"; AWGIE Awards for "David Williamson Prize for Literature", "Best Play" and the "Major Award" better known as the Golden AWGIE for Best Australian writing for 2017 bettering "Lion" by Luke Davies which was also up for this award.

The Drover's Wife play and the story within has since broken out as a film, novel and TV series commissioned and in-development. The stageplay is now being adapted in to a screenplay to be filmed late 2019, with the commissioning of the novel by Penguin Random House to be delivered mid-2019 and currently in-development is the TV series based on the novel. The play will roll out again nationally and internationally in 2020.

The Drover's Wife the Legend of Molly Johnson film and novel are two of the most exciting and anticipated Australian projects for 2019/2020.

LEAH PURCELL is one of this nation's most eminent cultural figures. She is arguably Australia's most outstanding cultural polymath – a multiple award-winning author, playwright, actor, director, film-maker, theatre-maker and screen-writer. That she directs her prodigious talents towards Indigenous and First Nations themes, characters and issues, has resulted in a body of work already considered canonical in our literary and stage history.

OOMBARRA PRODUCTIONS is one of Australia's leading independent Indigenous production company's working in the areas of film, TV, theatre and publishing. Along with its parent company Bungabura Productions (est1996) Oombarra Productions has operated since 2011.



PRAISE FOR THE PLAY

THE DROVER’S WIFE WON EVERY MAJOR AWARD FOR BOTH PRODUCTION AND SCRIPT IN AUSTRALIA DURING THE 2017 AWARDS SEASON. THIS ALL CULMINATED WITH THE COMMISSIONING OF THE NOVEL BY PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE PUBLISHERS IN 2018.

“PURCELL’S RUTHLESS, COMPELLING HOWL OF RAGE ROTATES THE PERSPECTIVE BACK OUT THROUGH THE EYES OF THE WOMAN. PERFORMING AN INTERSECTION OF GENDER AND RACE THAT ENCOMPASSES THE EPIC TRAGEDY OF BLACK COLONIAL HISTORY.”

“BRAVE, RUTHLESS AND UTTERLY COMPELLING FROM THE FIRST IMAGE, THIS EPIC TRAGEDY IS A PASSIONATE HOWL OF PAIN AND RAGE, WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY ANNOUNCING ITSELF AS A DECLARATION OF WAR ON AUSTRALIA’S WILFUL HISTORICAL AMNESIA.”

“LEAH PURCELL HAS MADE A BOLD AND EXCITING CONTRIBUTION TO AUSTRALIAN PLAYWRITING AND, ARGUABLY, TO AUSTRALIA’S IDENTITY.”

“A POWERFUL AND IMPORTANT STORY ABOUT JUSTICE, PERSEVERANCE, CULTURE, AND FAMILY.”

“SOME OF IT IS NOT EASY TO WATCH, BUT PURCELL MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE TO LOOK AWAY.”

“AN IMPORTANT WORK. IT PAUSES HISTORY’S ACCRETION OF HALF-TRUTHS AND DELIVERS OUR CHERISHED CLASSICS BACK TO US, ALIVE WITH A NEW MUSE.”

“PURCELL RANGES ACROSS FORM AND STYLE, FROM WESTERN TO HORROR TO COMIC FLOURISHES. THOUGH RELENTLESS IN ITS ANNIHILATION OF HOPE, THE DROVER’S WIFE STILL ALLOWS THE POSSIBILITY OF REDEMPTION.”

“SHE HAS REPURPOSED COLONIAL TROPES AND REINVENTED AN EXISTING FORM TO INSIST THAT WE CONSIDER A NEW EXPLORATION OF CULTURE. THE UNFORGETTABLE CENTRAL CHARACTER MOLLY JOHNSON BRIMS WITH EMOTIONAL INTEGRITY AND CONTRADICTION.”





A
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