

**PRESS KIT**

**'SOLITUDE'**

Director: Michael Raso  
Producers: JD Cohen & Michael Raso  
Solomon Pictures Pty Ltd

Michael Raso - Solomon Pictures - bogart93@hotmail.com - 0437 359 556  
JD Cohen - CineGear Productions - jd@cinegear.com.au - 0404 155 091

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### **ONE LINE TEASER**

Margaret is a lonely old lady who visits a train station each day. Why is she there?

### **ONE PARAGRAPH SYNOPSIS**

Margaret is a widow who wakes up each morning to an empty house. Each day she goes to the local train station and watches the world go by, listening to the announcements. The Station Master has noticed, and has prepared something. He gives her an envelope and tells her she should never come back. Margaret goes home and finds a cassette tape in the envelope. She plays it which reveals a recording of the train station announcements - the voice of her late husband.

### **FULL ONE PAGE SYNOPSIS**

Inside an old house located on the outskirts of the city lives a fragile old lady named Margaret Dillard. She's a widow in her mid seventies and has been suffering from loneliness and depression ever since her husband, Jack passed away. With no offspring and not too many surviving friends left, Margaret has struggled to look after herself and her house alone.

From her window, drinking a cup of tea by herself, she can see the trains rumbling by, which gives her a smile. It delights her living close to the railway line because she and Jack were employees there for almost fifty years.

Each day Margaret visits the station, this is noticed by the ticket attendant, Trish and her boss, Ted. Trish is worried about this, but Ted has already got something prepared and asks Trish to go and fetch an envelope.

Meanwhile, Margaret quietly sits on the platform bench listening to the public address announcements of arriving and departing trains. The announcements give her a great deal of happiness.

The Station Manager gives Margaret the envelope and tells her she should not come back, and that her husband is gone. When she goes home and opens the envelope, she finds a cassette tape. She plays it. To her delight it's a recording of the public address announcements, the voice of her late husband Jack.

## **Key Cast and Crew Bios**

### **Director: Michael Raso**

Born in a small town in Victoria, Michael's passion for film came from watching black and white and technicolor films from his father's collection. From working at a local Television Museum to Channel 31, Michael was always going to work in the film industry.

Starting out as a Production Runner on Rove Live, he now works with all the free to air networks on major sporting events and reality shows as a camera op. He's helped on low budget features in Melbourne and Sydney with JD Cohen, and many short films. His ambition to direct and tell his own stories led him to write Solitude, a story inspired by the loss of his great aunt and her request to be buried with her husband.

### **Producer: JD Cohen**

Born in NSW, but having lived half his life in the UK, Jon has a varied outlook on life but it was the time spent in an English boarding school made him the Producer he is today. After a dozen short films, Jon figured he was ready for a feature...

What he discovered was a steep learning curve worth every inch. The final product, Sum of Existence, screened on Channel 9, gave Jon the impetus to keep moving forward. With award winning shorts such as Wrong Answer and The Game (Tropfest shortlisted 2010), and 2 features released on DVD in the US and UK, he is always looking for the next good story to tell. And Solitude was that next story.

### **Cinematographer: Christopher J McHardy**

Chris has worked on half a dozen features, TV pilots and more short films than he can count. Most recently, he's moved into steadicam work, as it combines his skills in camera operating and movement.

### **Maggie Blinco**

My last performance at Sydney uni was in a time when Clive James wrote the script, and Ken Done did the artwork, it was 1960. The performance caught the attention of Richard Wherret, who years later would cast me in The Summer of the 17th Doll, which launched my career. Year later saw me struggling up a big flight of stairs on crutches with a smashed ankle to audition for Crocodile Dundee. Mr. Hogan was there for the callback, and I got the nod - mostly because I looked like a Queensland Barmaid, he told me some time later - talent was not the point. At the ripe old age of 81, I'm still working and still loving every minute of it as part of a vibrant and wonderful community of creative people.

**Christopher Clarke**

With leading roles in theatre productions, most recently as a juror in 12 Angry Men, Chris has a strong presence on stage and screen. He has also picked up some roles in ABC productions like, I Spy and How Not To Behave, and Mary MacKillop which was produced for the History Channel.

**Karen Kero**

An up and coming talent, with some strong work behind her. A curious fact about Karen is she was a stunt double for Rebecca Gibney on Packed to the Rafters.

**Director Statement - Michael Raso:**

Having worked on many other productions, I always had the desire to make my own short film - it was just a matter of finding the right story to tell. I wanted to have a twist at the end, something you wouldn't expect, but something that would touch the hearts of the audience. When I first started to discuss the idea with my sister, she told me it was a film that had to be made. With her encouragement, I wrote half a dozen drafts, creating the world in storyboards and costume ideas, the idea growing with each stage of pre-production. In Solitude, I aimed to make a film that would appeal to a broad audience, and the finished film is everything I hoped it would be. I hope people leave the film with a sense that love is forever, and sometimes you find happy memories in the most unlikely places.

**Producer Statement - JD Cohen:**

When Michael first came and talked to me about an idea he had for a short film about a little old lady going to a train station to listen to the announcements made by her now dead husband on the P.A system, my first thought was what a lovely story, this has to be told! Although a first time director, Michael had a great vision, but needed help realising it. He'd worked on my films before, I knew he had the drive to make a great film. Using contacts we'd made throughout the years, we got a great and passionate crew together, and Michael cast the film perfectly. The final result is poignant and beautiful composed film, that will touch people's hearts. I feel Solitude will go far in the festival circuit as a strong example of what Aussie filmmakers can do, and help Michael move forward onto his next piece.

## **Q & A**

### **What do you love about short film?**

I love the challenge of crystallising an idea and a story into a short time frame to deliver something poignant that can change the way people think.

### **What's the best filmmaking/storytelling advice that you've received?**

From a Q & A with director George Romero (Living Dead) - he said that tenacity was the most important quality for a filmmaker to have.

### **What has lead you to get started with filmmaking?**

Watching black and white and technicolor films from the 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s when I was a youngster. I loved the story telling from those eras and constantly attended The Astor cinema in Melbourne with my father to watch them on the big screen.

### **Is this your first short film? If not, please provide a brief filmography.**

Yes, first as Director.

### **How long did it take to produce your film?**

About 7 months.

### **Where was your film shot? Were there any unusual or challenging locations?**

A house in Sandringham, and Arncliffe Train Station - which was the challenging location. While the film had rail platform announcements done by a voiceover actor, the continual real announcements on the platform was a challenge for the actors and the sound recordist, and for post production editing.

### **Tell us something that nobody knows about you.**

I'm an appointed Australian Football League field umpire and have been for over a decade.

**Describe a funny/tragic/difficult/great moment that contributed to the making of your film.**

According to the script, trains were meant to run on the platform the old lady was sitting on. But the platform we were given at Arncliffe Train Station never had trains running on it on a weekend, which was when we were filming. But due to a blackout at Hurstville, the trains were diverted that day to the platform we were filming on. We got the trains the script needed because of a blackout that occurred by chance!

**Did anyone notable or well known participate in your film?**

Maggie Blinco, who was in the two Crocodile Dundee films, and various Australian TV shows.

**What are your interests outside of filmmaking?**

I'm into fitness, sports, movie history, and history in general, classic and nostalgic automobiles.

**Have you ever or are you working in the film industry or a related industry, such as television or advertising? If so, where?**

Yes - Freelance camera operator for NEP Broadcast, Gearhouse Broadcast, Cutting Edge, Channel 7, 9, 10 and ABC, Fox Sports.

**What has been your greatest inspiration when filmmaking?**

Having worked on lots of different productions, watching people create their stories inspired me to create my own.

**If you could collaborate on a film with three people, living or dead, who would you choose and why?**

Humphrey Bogart - He had amazing presence and was a diverse performer.

Steven Spielberg - He has the qualities I admire in a director and filmmaker.

My cast and crew on Solitude - I had a great time shooting the film and I could not have made the film without them.