

PRESS BOOK

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY WARWICK THORNTON

# SAMSON & DELILAH

TRUE LOVE

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# SAMSON & DELILAH

— TRUE LOVE —

PRESENTED BY **SCARLETT PICTURES & CAAMA PRODUCTIONS**  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH **SCREEN AUSTRALIA INDIGENOUS BRANCH**  
**NEW SOUTH WALES FILM & TELEVISION OFFICE**  
**AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION**  
**ADELAIDE FILM FESTIVAL AND NT FILM OFFICE**

## AUSTRALASIAN DISTRIBUTION

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## INTERNATIONAL SALES

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## KEY CAST & CREW

SAMSON **ROWAN McNAMARA**  
DELILAH **MARISSA GIBSON**  
NANA **MITILI GIBSON**  
GONZO **SCOTT THORNTON**

WRITER/DIRECTOR **WARWICK THORNTON**  
PRODUCER **KATH SHELPER**  
ASSISTANT PRODUCER/CASTING **PETER BARTLETT**  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **WARWICK THORNTON**  
EDITOR **ROLAND GALLOIS**  
PRODUCTION DESIGN **DARAN FULHAM**  
COSTUMER **HEATHER WALLACE**  
MAKE-UP **CAROL CAMERON**  
SOUND RECORDIST **DAVID TRANTER**  
SOUND DESIGN **LIAM EGAN**

## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Running Time: 101 mins  
Length (metres): 2880 m  
Length (feet): 9447 ft  
Ratio: 1:1.85 35mm colour  
Sound: Dolby Digital  
Rating: MA 15+  
Language: English, Warlpiri  
Filmed on location in Central Australia



# SYNOPSIS

Samson and Delilah's world is small – an isolated community in the Central Australian desert.

When tragedy strikes they turn their backs on home and embark on a journey of survival.

Lost, unwanted and alone they discover that life isn't always fair, but love never judges.

# WARWICK THORNTON

## WRITER/DIRECTOR

Everybody owns a reason for being. In everybody's journey through life there is the good fight.

SAMSON & DELILAH is my reason for being. It is my good fight.

Storytelling has been a way of life for my people over thousands of generations, from singing stories under the stars to celluloid on the screen. The medium has changed but the reasons for telling our stories have not.

I believe that this is a story I needed to tell. You have to believe in your stories and trust that an audience will take the journey with you and your characters.

The audience's journey through the darkness makes the light brighter at the end. Samson and Delilah's unconventional love is that light. Their challenges and struggles are inspired by what I see every day as I journey through my own life here in Central Australia. It is real.

## ON LOVE

SAMSON & DELILAH is a love story, but perhaps not in the traditional sense. It is a story that deals with life on a remote Aboriginal community and the ways in which one young couple manage to escape from this mundane existence.

The central theme that I wanted to explore is love, but not in the conventional sense, not a usual sort of love – a love that develops out of survival. Necessary love.

It is a story about the many different ways in which love grows. Samson and Delilah have a very unusual relationship and their love is strong but understated and it develops as their trust develops. But will it save them?

It's a film about people who are classed not even as people – let alone people who are allowed to love or have emotions. They're not allowed to be human. They are the untouchables.

I believe that the story of these two young lovers, Samson and Delilah, is an important and unique story to tell – it's an untold story. In the end, even though life is going to be hard, I want the audience to feel like there are real possibilities of success for them. A new life. Hope.



## ON METHOD

A sensitive film such as **SAMSON & DELILAH** could quite easily die in the madness of conventional filmmaking: the crews, the trucks, the process.

So we decided to take a different approach. One we know works. A small crew, no trucks, just the bare minimums. A crew chosen for their hearts, not their CVs.

The two characters are played by first time, untrained actors – but they have life-long experiences as community kids. They knew the lives that Samson and Delilah lived and they were able to draw on that reality.

The camera and design reinforce this reality: hand held, raw, real. No grips, no gaffers, no cranes, no tracks, not too many lights. I shot the film myself to have nothing between me and the actors, except the beautiful 35mm Panavision camera.







# KATH SHELPER

## PRODUCER

I first worked with Warwick on our short film GREEN BUSH in 2004 and then on NANA in 2006. But prior to this I had secretly been a big fan of his since I saw his first short film PAYBACK in the late 90s. I thought then, "I want to work with this guy". But I never told him that.

When I first met Warwick he was gruff and a bit dismissive of producers and I was timid. I was producing his wife Beck's film and he asked me to produce GREEN BUSH because I happened to ring the week he needed a producer. Now we're stuck with each other. We have developed a really strong creative partnership over the years, which I think is crucial for making good films.

We started talking about SAMSON & DELILAH after the shoot of GREEN BUSH, which is when Warwick was forming the idea. We made NANA as a 'test case' for

the premise of the feature but also the method by which Warwick wanted to make it.

Warwick's films make people feel like they're on the inside and that they're not being judged or judging. His films are about cycles of violence and habits and that that's the way things are. But he also shows a little something that someone is doing to try to break the cycle. His films invite the audience to be intimate with his world – something they would otherwise not be privileged to experience without cinema. And no matter what there is always an upside and a sense of hope and that life goes on.

I love the matter-of-fact nature of his films, the strong sense of humanity and most of all that there is hope for a better life. He's also pretty funny when he wants to be.

# MARISSA GIBSON

## DELILAH

Marissa has had small parts in film and television productions as an extra, but this is her first major role. She lives in Alice Springs, where she attends high school and studies her favourite subject – Japanese. She already speaks three languages – Warlpiri, Luritja and English. Marissa put her acting wages towards a school study tour of Japan after the completion of filming.

## MARISSA ON DELILAH

"Delilah is a teenager who lives out bush on a community. She's kind hearted, respects her elders. She lives with her nana who passes away – her family thinks it's her fault and punish her (with sticks). Then she meets a guy, another Aboriginal teenager Samson and then they fall in love, they don't say it but they feel it. Aboriginal people don't say very much, we just use body language. They go into town but have nowhere to stay because they are from out bush so they stay under the bridge in the creek. They try to get food but they don't have money so they start to steal, and slowly Delilah becomes another person. I hope the film teaches people who don't really know Aboriginal people that it's different here, compared to other places, it's hard to explain, we just live in a different world."







# ROWAN McNAMARA SAMSON

Rowan McNamara makes his screen debut in SAMSON & DELILAH. He hails from the Aboriginal Community of Santa Teresa, 80km southeast of Alice Springs. He and his family now live in Hidden Valley town camp in Alice Springs. English is a second language for Rowan – at home he speaks the language of his people, Eastern Arrente. Rowan is a keen AFL footballer and is an obsessed fan of Essendon Football Club. He's travelled Australia playing football with his school.

## ROWAN ON SAMSON

"My name is Rowan McNamara, I act as Samson in the movie. Samson likes hunting, sniffing and listening to music, but not his brother's band. Oh, and he's lover-lover for Delilah. I like acting, but not with girls, they just wreck it. Nah, only gammon (joking)."

# MITJILI GIBSON

## NANA

Mitjili's first drama was playing the title role in Warwick's short film NANA, which was shot at the end of 2006. She has also been featured in Beck Cole's SBS documentary LORE OF LOVE, where she teaches her granddaughters about the traditional rules of love.

Mitjili is Marissa Gibson's actual step-grandmother and is thought to have been born around 1938 in Pintupi country, near Kiwirrkurra, WA. In 1957, when she was met by anthropologist Donald Thompson's expedition, she was a married woman with one child and another on the way, living a traditional lifestyle.

Mitjili's bush skills are still in demand today, whether she is tracking endangered animals to help with scientific research, showing the secrets of the Western Desert to visiting film crews, or hunting for her own enjoyment.

Through the 60s until the late 90s, Mitjili lived in the Yuendumu and Nyirripi Communities, before moving to Alice Springs. Acting is the latest of many jobs in Mitjili's life. She has also taken up painting in the last few years and has quickly become a very highly regarded artist. Her first solo show at Gondwana Gallery sold out in a matter of hours and her colourful works are highly collectable. The beautiful artworks used in the film are her own.

Warwick Thornton says of Mitjili, "What she brings is this incredible ray of sunshine, this amazing truth and reality to film. She just owns the screen."





# SCOTT THORNTON

## GONZO

Scott studied acting at the Eora Centre in Redfern, Sydney. His first film role was in a short film called **CAMPING OUT** by Lee Willis-Ardler.

Gonzo, an alcoholic who lives under a bridge in town, is one of the few people to show compassion to Samson and Delilah in their tumultuous journey. The role was written specifically for Warwick's brother Scott.

"He actually owns that character," says Warwick. "I wrote it based on my brother. Under the bridge; mad as a cut snake; alcoholic; all of that sort of stuff, that is my brother, he actually is that person."

Scott went into a rehabilitation program in Cairns for many months to be prepared for the acting role. Warwick struck a deal with his brother – go into rehab and look at your problem and you can have the role in the film. "After he finished that he jumped on a plane, and flew over to Alice Springs. Two days later we were rehearsing in our backyard. The day after that he's on set and the camera is in his face. He did an incredible job," says Thornton. "What I wanted was someone who's going to back me up and know more about that character than me, and that's what I got with my brother, because he's lived that life, and he can draw on his own experience to do that."

# WARWICK THORNTON

## BIOGRAPHY

Warwick has written and directed several short dramas, most recently the 2008 Berlinale prize-winning NANA. Warwick was awarded the Emerging Filmmaker Award at the Melbourne International Film Festival for NANA as well as the IF Award for Best Short Film. The film screened on opening night at Sydney Film Festival.

His previous short drama, half-hour GREEN BUSH, won Best Short in the Panorama section at the Berlin International Film Festival 2005. GREEN BUSH premiered at Sundance and won a swag of awards all over the world, including the IF Award for Best Short Film and two Dendy Awards (Best in its section and best overall – the Rouben Mamoulian Award).

Warwick directed the short comedy MIMI in 2002 (starring Aaron Pedersen and Sophie Lee) and his 1996 first short drama PAYBACK, screened at Telluride Film Festival. Warwick started his career as a cinematographer (he graduated from AFTRS in 1997) and he continues to shoot for other people while developing and making his own projects. Most recently he shot several episodes of the FIRST AUSTRALIANS SBS documentary series.

Warwick has also shot and directed many other documentaries for CAAMA Productions and the national broadcasters - ABC and SBS. He is about to start work shooting and directing a 3 hour documentary series with Aboriginal art curator Hetti Perkins and producer Bridget Ikin, called ART AND SOUL.





# KATH SHELPER

## BIOGRAPHY

Kath produced both Warwick's short films GREEN BUSH and NANA. NANA was part of a series Kath produced called BIT OF BLACK BUSINESS (thirteen 5-minute short dramas for SBS TV that were written and directed by Indigenous directors all around Australia). The films have screened together and individually all around the world. Another in the series, HUSH, won the Audience Award at the Creteil International Women's Film Festival in 2008.

Kath also produced short film PLAINS EMPTY (dir: Beck Cole), which premiered at Sundance in the same year as GREEN BUSH. Her other award winning shorts include CONFESSIONS OF A HEADHUNTER, which won Best Short Film at the 2000 AFI Awards and ABOVE THE DUST LEVEL (Best Comedy, Melbourne Film Festival, 1999).

Kath was awarded the Rising Talent Award at the Inside Film (IF) Awards in 2005.

Kath is also producing a documentary about the making of SAMSON & DELILAH through the eyes of the two young cast. The documentary is being directed and co-produced by Beck Cole for ABC TV. Kath is preparing to shoot her second feature later in the year, THE PLACE BETWEEN, which is written and to be directed also by Beck Cole.







