

“POP-UP”  
ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

*3 Strangers – 2 Continents – 1 Moment*

*Pop-Up* is a feature-length drama written and directed by Stuart McBratney. It was filmed in Newcastle, Australia, and Transylvania, Romania, and features interweaving stories of three strangers affected by one event.

An unemployed father finds a camera containing a single photo of a woman's face. Smitten, he tracks her down. A Romanian immigrant attempts to overcome her heartbreak by giving away home-made pop-up cards. And a sleep-deprived theatre director seeks deadly revenge on a scathing critic.

*Pop-Up* is an international odyssey, an unpredictable adventure, and a cinematic experience you won't forget. And you'll never see a toothbrush again the same way.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

*Pop-Up* is a feature-length ensemble drama told in three interweaving parts. Shot on location in Newcastle, Australia, and Transylvania, Romania, it tells the stories of Mick, Rada, and Neil. Their backgrounds are poles apart, and in one moment their lives change forever.

### Mick

Mick is down on his luck. He's struggled to move on after his wife left 8 years ago, and now an unusual phobia complicates his job hunt. His daughter Emily keeps him centred, though it's hard to pay rent when the bank fines \$20 for insufficient funds.

One day, Mick finds an old digital camera containing a single photo of a woman's face. Smitten, he tracks her down. But when meeting face-to-face exposes him to his phobia, he's forced to confront his demons head-on.



### Rada

Sick of her domestic duties in a small Transylvanian town, and inspired by her younger sister's American partner, Rada tries her hand at online dating. She meets Sam, an Australian. He has a stutter, and she has a prominent birthmark, so they're a match.

After moving Down Under, their relationship is tested when Sam receives an implant to ease his affliction. Now he can speak clearly, his true personality can shine through. But as Rada discovers, perhaps that's not the best thing, as his social status upgrade leaves her in the dust.

Ghosted and alone in a foreign country, Rada deals with her loss in several ways. She wallows in self-pity, reminiscing about better days in her home country. She drowns her sorrows and has a bender on the town. Finally, she channels her feelings, and

makes pop-up cards for everyone she knows. While delivering the cards, a freak accident throws her life in a new direction.



### Neil

Neil has managed to eschew adult responsibilities most of his life. His mother a successful businesswoman, he survives off her handouts, leaping from one hare-brained scheme to another. His failed ventures include a chess boxing club, a decaf café, and a scuba diving course in Greece.

His latest idea is to stage a play – one he’s written himself – and his mother reluctantly funds it. The opening night is a success, but a critic’s scathing review unleashes Neil’s dark, dangerous temperament.



*Pop-Up* is a modern movie portraying life’s trials, from the random to the self-inflicted. It’s about three strangers struggling to make sense of their predicaments, and whose lives are connected more than they realise.

## CAST

*Pop-Up* features an ensemble of world-class talent. Between them, their previous work has garnered a Berlinale Silver Bear (Clara Voda), the Palme d'Or (Laura Vasiliu), five Matilda Awards (Eugene Gilfedder), and several Logies (Chris Taylor).

Lead by Clara Voda, Eugene Gilfedder and Greg Powell, the incredible performances take audiences on a unique and surprising journey.

Rada - Clara Voda  
Neil – Greg Powell  
Mick – Eugene Gilfedder  
Sam – Brenton Prince  
Richie – Evan Olman  
Emily – Ellacoco Hammer  
Adela – Laura Vasilia  
Nina – Maria Ploae  
The Strange Man – David Elliot  
Yana – May Grehan  
Barry- Greg Sullivan  
TV Host – Chris Taylor  
Roxana – Melissa Hanes  
Duncan – Tom Dalzell  
Jen – Genna Hayes  
Hamish – Stuart McBratney



## PRODUCTION

*Pop-Up* was filmed primarily in Newcastle, Australia and Sebes, Romania, with additional shoots in Sydney and Brisbane (Australia), and Lancram (Romania). It totalled 50 shooting days spread out over two years between 2013 - 2015.



The film was financed and produced by McBrat Motion Pictures, based in Newcastle. Around 20% of the funding was raised through crowdfunding platforms Kickstarter and Pozible, with the remaining budget sourced through tv commercial production.

The Romanian sequence, which comprises around 20% of the completed film, was produced by Eduard Schneider's company in Sebes, Schneider Productions.

Post-production overlapped with production, with the edit commencing before filming was completed. Post facilities included McBrat Motion Pictures, the University of Newcastle, Hunter TAFE, the New York Film Academy (Sydney), Schneider Productions (Sebes), Final Post (Newcastle), and Studio Mice (Bucharest).

Producer/Writer/Director/Editor/Sound Designer/Composer – Stuart McBratney  
Co-Producer – Rebecca Abramovic  
Co-Producer / Cinematographer (Romania) – Eduard Schneider  
Director of Photography – Clinton Harn  
Production Designer – Kayla Outhred  
Make-Up – Donna Gian  
Colourist – Shane Burrell



### DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I started scrawling ideas for *Pop-Up* around the time Obama was elected into office. Almost two terms later, the movie's finally finished. I must've inherited my dad's stick-to-it-iveness; he spent 17 years building a boat.

Since 2008 I've made a tv series in Russia and Ukraine, a few music videos, 100+ commercials, and a rock opera. But *Pop-Up* was always there, nagging.

Finally, in early 2013, I decided to take the leap, and work on the movie full-time. I started putting ads on Gumtree – Australia’s answer to Craigslist - and began to assemble my team.

Meanwhile, I commenced a PhD at the University of Newcastle (the Aussie Newcastle, not the English one. We have beaches.) In addition to writing a thesis, *Pop-Up* was to be my major work, for which I’d have access to cool gear. “You had me at gear,” I said, possibly aloud.

Now, after almost three years at the grindstone and four previous years tinkering, the movie is finally completed. So the inevitable question is, “What’s it about?”

The easy answer is to recite our facebook synopsis. But a few people enquire deeper. “Yeah, but, what’s it *about*?” There was no Big Truth that I wanted to proclaim. I had three stories I thought might make a good movie, and through the process of writing, storyboarding, shooting, editing, mixing, and drinking heroic quantities of coffee, I began to unlock their secrets.

My first draft referenced a spark – a pinprick of hope – something to help put one foot in front of the other in a dark moment. This was soon abandoned for sounding a bit naff, but this ephemeral notion remained. I just needed to refine it so viewers wouldn’t choke on their popcorn.

In later drafts, the idea infused the dinner scene in Transylvania, where Richie, the lucky devil, is surrounded by three Romanian women. The mother equates love to an underground spring – that if blocked it will find a way out. Rada takes her advice, and makes pop-up cards as an outlet during her lowest of days.



Likewise, Mick still grieves his wife's departure 8 years later. Sublimating his guilt, it manifests as a phobia. But upon finding Rada's picture, something is sparked, waking a long-dormant passion as he seeks this mystery woman.

Perhaps Obama's iconic HOPE poster subconsciously affected me, imprinting my impressionable new-born ideas? Granted, reducing an entire movie to a single word is somewhat reductive, but that's at least a nice Q&A anecdote. As an indie filmmaker, sometimes hope is all you've got.

If you're lucky, you'll also have some bad stuff happen in your life, because the juiciest lemons make the best lemonade. My idea for Neil wanting to kill a critic arrived after my first movie, *Spudmonkey*, received a 2-star review. Many other story elements were derived from setbacks, big and small, personal and extrapersonal. Indie filmmaking is like therapy, without the comfy couch.



I hope that the viewer feels something when they watch *Pop-Up*. We've held a few test screenings of the work-in-progress, and a couple of Cast, Crew & Kickstarter screenings, and I'll never forget when a crowdfunding friend said, "It was like you'd made a movie about me."

*Pop-Up* is the confluence of hundreds of people working for thousands of hours, to arrange billions of ones and zeros in a certain order. If that effort gives one person some hopey changey stuff, then it's all worth it.

Oh, and someone gets killed by a toothbrush. Did I mention that?



## DIRECTOR BIO



Stuart McBratney has directed numerous short films and music videos, a tv series, two feature films, and around 500 tv commercials for clients including McDonalds, Honda and Sony. He's currently a PhD candidate at the University of Newcastle, Australia, and lectures at the New York Film Academy, Sydney. Pop-Up is his second feature film as writer/director/producer. He was also the film's editor, sound designer, and composer.

Born in Sydney, Australia, Stuart McBratney was inspired to become a filmmaker at age seven, upon seeing *The Empire Strikes Back*.

After finishing university at age 19, he moved to London the following year. There he worked in a variety of factory and office admin jobs, eventually landing freelance directing assignments for a pay tv station.

Upon his return to Australia after 18 months, he found full-time work as corporate cameraman in Brisbane, shooting countless cheap commercials, only to be made redundant after a corporate merger. He then returned to university to study honours in film and tv production, and for his thesis made his first feature film, *Spudmonkey*. Better late than never, it received a limited theatrical release 8 years later.

In his late 20s, McBratney was offered his first full-time directing job. It was to write, produce, direct, shoot and edit low-budget tv commercials for a regional tv station in Bundaberg, servicing a population of 50,000. He made the most of the opportunity, and within two years had moved to the head office in Canberra to make ads for the national market.



Torn between his love of film and music, he soon left Australia to live in Berlin for a year, collaborating with producer/dj Chopstick to create the rock opera *Soul Delay* by The Mischief Engine. Upon his return Down Under, he missed Berlin dearly, so he threw himself into commercials. By now he was attracting clients such as McDonalds, Honda and Nike.

Not content making movies shorter than a rock-paper-scissors match, his production company began to focus on longer projects. The first of these was *Back in the Soviet Bloc*, a 7-episode factual tv series shot in Russia and Ukraine. The second was *Pop-Up*.

Stuart McBratney has left too many books half-read, occasionally falls asleep with his guitar, and does boxing to counterbalance hours staring at glowing rectangles.

## ACTOR BIOS

### Clara Voda – “Rada”



Having studied a Masters of Acting at Romania’s National University of Theatre and Film, Clara Voda has forged a distinguished career in European film and theatre. Her fluency in English, Spanish, French and Romanian has helped expand her career internationally.

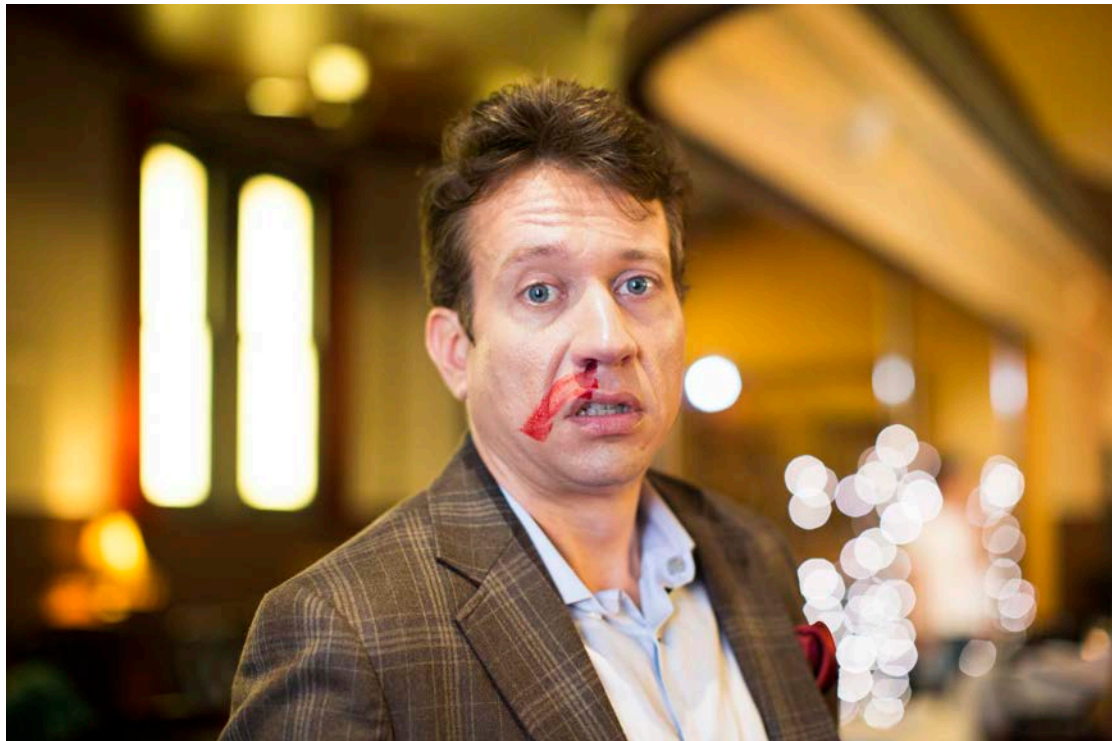
Clara’s credits include *If I Want to Whistle I Whistle* (Winner of the Berlinale Silver Bear), *The Death of Mister Lazarescu* (awarded the Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival), *Night Falls in India*, and *Pop-Up*. She has

received GOPO and UCN awards in Romania, and received a nomination for Best Actress at the Malaga Film Festival, Spain.

Clara has extensive experience in theatre, with roles in Master Class (Terrence McNally), and The Triumph of Love (Pierre de Marivaux). She also has toured to theatre festivals in Italy, France, Spain, Columbia, Canada and USA with productions of The Lesson (Eugene Ionesco) and De Pretore Vincenzo (Eduardo de Filippo).

Clara relocated to Sydney, Australia from Bucharest, Romania in 2013. *Pop-Up* is her first starring role in an Australian film.

#### Greg Powell - "Neil"



*Pop-Up* is Greg Powell's third leading role in a feature film. His debut in Jackson's *Crew* during his teenage years was followed by the lead role in Stuart McBratney's film *Spudmonkey*. Stuart and Greg later teamed up to make *Pop-Up*.

Over the years, Greg has become a familiar face on Australian television, with innumerable roles in high-profile tv commercials including Subway, Keno, The Courier Mail, Brisbane Airport Parking, and Telstra. People recognising him in the street often ask whether they went to school together.

Many of Greg's tv roles have been of the zany variety, portraying characters such as Bob the Courier Guy – part a long-running campaign for tv network Southern Cross Ten.

Greg is also a professional musician. His first band Red Surrender was a regular in Brisbane's live music scene, and he now works tirelessly with his wife Rose in Chi-Chi, keeping crowds dancing around Australia. Having played over a thousand gigs as singer, keyboardist, rapper, and eternal comedian, Greg is the consummate entertainer - a valuable asset when things get too serious on set.

### Eugene Gilfedder - "Mick"



If you've seen Australian theatre in the last few decades it's likely you'll recognise Eugene, an actor with 30 years of experience as a performer, writer, director and composer.

Born into a family of 10 children, Eugene and his siblings were encouraged to perform and experiment by his "bohemian" parents. As a child he would act out silent films for the family, moving rapidly to emulate the sped-up black and white moving pictures, while a sister accompanied him on piano.

Moving from Melbourne to Queensland at age 12, Eugene went on to complete a Bachelor of Arts with honours at the University of Queensland, throwing himself into classics, ancient history, philosophy, music and literature.

Having won five Matilda Awards, Eugene is inarguably one of Australia's most highly-regarded theatre performers, so he was a natural choice for the demanding role of Mick in Pop-Up. Since wrapping the shoot, he has performed in Death and The Maiden and The Stranger at the Sydney Theatre Company.



## Brenton Prince – “Sam”



Brenton Prince was born in Newcastle, Australia, and grew up surfing the city's reef and beach breaks. He started playing rugby league at the age of 8 and would later become a junior Newcastle representative footballer with a promising future in the sport.

After a few setbacks which resulted in a "lack of passion" for the game, his mother suggested he should have a try at acting. After attending a NIDA workshop, he caught the acting bug and set out to pursue a career as a professional actor. He joined an amateur theatre group in Sydney and performed various plays in and around the city where his passion for performing grew.

Looking to further his training and enhance his craft, Brenton applied for a 2 year intense acting program at the Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute in New York City and was accepted. After graduating in 2010 Brenton returned to Sydney and has been working as a professional actor since. His most noted roles to date include playing Jay Gatsby's head security guard in Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby*, and playing Sam in *Pop-Up*.

## DIRECTOR Q & A

(Stuart McBratney - interviewed by YAK Magazine, Newcastle, Australia, 2015.)

*Can you pick a single film that got you into making movies?*



When I was 7, I saw *The Empire Strikes Back* in a cinema. At the moment the snowspeeder flew beneath the legs of the AT-AT in a point-of-view shot, I had an epiphany: I was going to make movies. Decades since, I'm still working towards it. My taste has evolved over the years, but the goal remains.

*What is the main reason you are doing a PhD at University of Newcastle? What's it about?*



There's always been a part of me that's wanted to take my studies further, but I was working full-time in advertising for many years, so the timing wasn't right. A few years ago I quit my job to focus on running a business, which gave me the freedom to pursue my own projects. I enjoy learning new things, and I like to challenge myself, so when the PhD opportunity arose I jumped at it.

My thesis title is *Pragmatism and Bricolage in Microbudget Feature Filmmaking*. I'm developing a model for making films on very small budgets, by studying production diaries of filmmakers who've had success in this field, and by reflecting on my own experience making a movie. It's a "PhD by creative work", which in my case means the production of *Pop-Up*, a comedy drama featuring three interweaving stories, set in Newcastle and Transylvania.

*You've used crowdfunding on your latest film as well as other projects. What are the biggest advantages or disadvantages of this?*

I raised about a fifth of my budget from crowdfunding. The rest was funded through the production of tv commercials and web promos. The good thing

about using Pozible or Kickstarter is that it helps you get the ball rolling. I suspect that most people with a few hundred facebook friends should have no problem raising \$10K

But unless you've invented something amazing like a new type of butter knife, or you're a celebrity such as Zach Braff, those much-touted figures of millions of dollars won't materialise. Strangers will rarely fund your work. You will get your money from friends and family.

Running a successful campaign is a full-time job. It requires personalised emails sent every day, and reminders, and more reminders, to hundreds of people. And sometimes you'll feel like a beggar. But hey, if you have a burning desire to make something, do whatever it takes.

*What is your favourite Australian film? Favourite film you've seen recently?*

I will always have a soft spot for *The Castle*. When I have friends over from overseas, I'll show it to them, as it's a great introduction to Aussie sensibilities. It was also made for a relatively low budget, which is an area of interest for me. I also think *Lantana* is a great Aussie movie.

Recently, *Her* has been my favourite. It struck such a perfect balance between drama and comedy, and somehow made its premise utterly believable. I hope one day to make a film as beautiful and compelling.

*What is something people may not know about you?*

Perhaps the variety of jobs I've done over the years. I've been a waiter in a Chinese restaurant, a pizza delivery guy, a shopping centre spruiker, a mailroom sorter, a Work for the Dole project co-ordinator, a tutor, and have even walked around shopping centres dressed as a giant apple!

You've worked on hundreds of TV commercials in your career. Do they present as much opportunity for creativity and experimentation, or are you more likely to treat them as something that pays the bills?

It's a bit of both. I'd hate to get to retirement age and look back having only made commercials, as I'd feel I hadn't contributed anything to society. But the actual process of making them is precisely the same process as making a movie, just on a smaller scale. So every commercial job is an experience that makes me a better filmmaker, and for that I'm thankful.

*Best advice you've been given?*

I was really lucky to have met one of my heroes when I lived in Berlin, director Wim Wenders. I'd tagged along to an exhibition of his photography, and he was there in person. I worked up the courage to speak to him, and he was gracious enough not to brush me off, though I'm sure he's pestered by aspiring filmmakers daily.

He told me about his friend who'd made an entire feature on the Fisher-Price Pixelvision camera. Shooting only 100 lines of resolution, 16 frames per second, and in black and white, it's about the lowest quality format available. But he said that it was a beautiful film. His advice was not to get too hung up on technicalities such as resolution, because ultimately the only thing that matters is to tell a great story.

*What is your guilty pleasure?*

If you'd asked me this a couple of weeks ago I'd have said triple choc Ben and Jerry's ice cream, or maybe thin and crispy pepperoni pizza. But I've recently decided to eat better, so I guess these days it'd be rice paper rolls and pho at Saigon Feast, Hunter Street. It's the best Vietnamese in town, and believe me, I've tried them all!

#### PRODUCTION NOTES:

*Writer/Director Stuart McBratney reflects on some of the daily challenges during the making of Pop-Up.*

#### Writing

*Pop-Up's* first draft was written in four days in 2008, based on a scene breakdown I had prepared months earlier. Determined to make a film quickly after my first feature *Spudmonkey* took 8 years to be released, I decided to make something I could fund myself. That decision guided every aspect of the production from conception to completion.

The film is made up of three separate yet interlinked stories. Here's what inspired each of them:

*1. A man finds a camera containing a single photo of a woman's face. Smitten, he tracks her down.*

When I lived in Berlin in 2007 I was signed to a Romanian production company as a director, and I often pitched ideas for music videos. This story was one of my rejected pitches, and for some reason it stuck with me.

*2. A woman makes pop-up cards for everyone she knows and hand delivers them.*

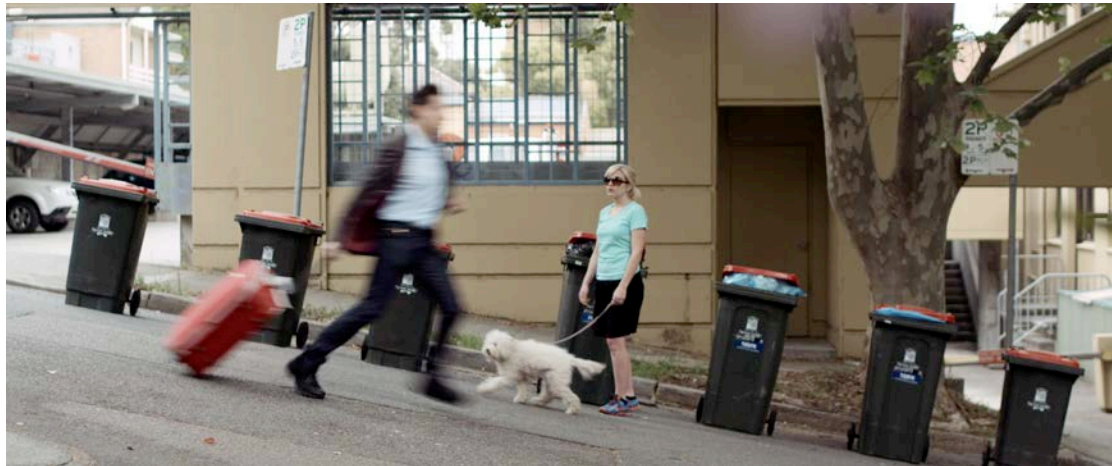
I used to make pop-up cards for my family as a kid, so I combined this with the idea of an immigrant being sad and alone, and seeking an outlet for her feelings. I also took inspiration from *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* where a girl in Hiroshima believes she can survive radiation sickness with the help of origami.

*3. A theatre director seeks deadly revenge on a critic.*

A critic rated my first movie *Spudmonkey* a mere 2 stars out of 5. I now feel this was well-deserved, but at the time I was indignant, so I decided to channel my frustrations onto the page.

To combine these three stories, I had the option to intercut like in *Love Actually* or *Short Cuts*, but I felt this might be frustrating - just when the viewer would become immersed a story, it'd shift focus. So instead I opted for the triptych structure used in films like *Amores Perros*, *The Place Beyond the Pines*, and *The Three Colours* trilogy.

To create a linking point between the three movies, I needed a moment for all three characters to be in the same place at the same time. I wanted something kinetic, visually engaging, and which could be achieved on a shoestring budget. I came up with a guy running down a steep street dragging luggage, then colliding with a pedestrian. I felt this would be a striking image, and would be cheaper than blowing up a helicopter.



### Casting

*Pop-Up's* three lead actors all deliver brilliant performances. Here's how I found them:

#### Clara Voda

The character of Rada was originally to be played by Romanian actress Laura Vasiliu, star of the Palme d'Or winning masterpiece *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*. Then the Australian government refused to issue her a Visa. I was extremely disappointed, but almost immediately afterwards Clara Voda was offered a distinguished talent Visa to move to Australia. She was perfect, and better matched to Eugene Gilfedder anyway.





Luckily I was able to cast Laura to play Rada's sister Adela in the Romanian scenes.

Clara brought great warmth and complexity to Rada, creating a welcome answer to the manic pixie dream girls saturating our screens.

### Eugene Gilfedder

When I studied theatre in high school in Brisbane, class excursions took us to the La Boite theatre in Brisbane, where we were all in awe of Eugene Gilfedder's performances. A few years later, he was my drama teacher at Griffith University, where I attended film school.

A decade-and-a-half later in 2009, I noticed he'd appeared in a play with an actor I'd recently cast in a tv commercial. I re-established contact, sent him the script, and he loved it. 4 years after that, we were filming in Newcastle.



Eugene's ability to give depth to a character is summed up in the film's opening shot. Like a scene from a Michael Leunig cartoon, the joyfulness of the kid on Mick's back belies the struggle wrought to shield her from his woes. His

portrayal is captivating, authentically portraying a complex inner life, and bringing gravitas to the film.

### Greg Powell

Greg Powell was the lead role in *Spudmonkey*. I must've had him in mind when writing Neil, because he inhabits the character so perfectly. So when it came time for casting, I didn't even look at anyone else. Greg reminds me a little of Paul Giamatti – both of them do comic intensity brilliantly.

One of the best things about working with Greg is the work he puts into developing a character. In the scene where Neil begs his mother for money over lunch, Greg suggested that she list his previous failed business ideas. This resulted in their memorable dialogue about his “decaf café”, “chess boxing club” and his ill-fated attempt at scuba diving in Greece.

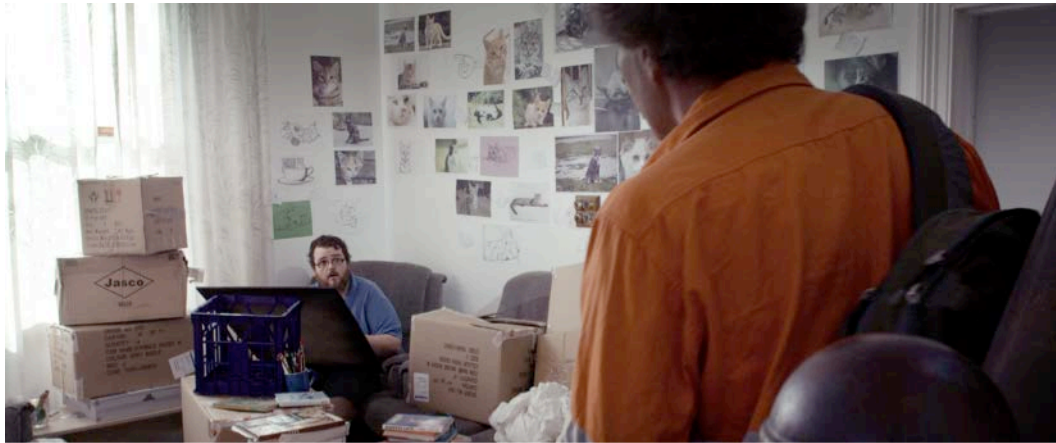


Greg's work as a professional musician lends his dialogue a musical rhythm, and his boyish vulnerability provides the perfect counterpoint to his character's frenzied actions.

### Production Design

No sets were constructed for *Pop-Up*. With only a meagre budget to cover the entire production, sets were found which already had the necessary elements in place. Additional set dressing was a last resort.

In an early draft, Mick's landlord Barry was building his art installation from old machinery in their lounge room. This proved impossible without money, so we scaled it back. Instead of him being a sculptor, he became a painter who paints cats, justifying the use of public domain cat pictures to adorn his lounge room wall. We found a bunch of boxes too, which added to the scene without costing a cent.



The frustration of the tenant - feeling his landlord was impinging upon his personal space - remained intact. Like the sheet outside the convenience store in *Clerks*, the compromise was written into the script.

On one occasion we did use a set – for Neil's play *Metamorphology*. In this case, it had already been designed for the Newcastle Theatre Company. Knowing the available set was a ramshackle Berlin apartment on the eve of World War 2, I wrote the Neil's play sequences accordingly.



### Principal Photography

Despite being exhausted every night after long shoot days, I still forced myself to storyboard the next day's scenes before bed. Craving sleep, I kept things simple, which meant we weren't bogged down by complexity the next day.

I knew that extremely long hours would result in mutiny. We planned to shoot a 12-hour day each day, including a break for lunch. Only on two occasions did we go overtime, and never for more than 30 minutes.









The production kept to a tight schedule. Without the time nor the temperament to record a large number of takes, we averaged 4 or 5 takes per set-up.

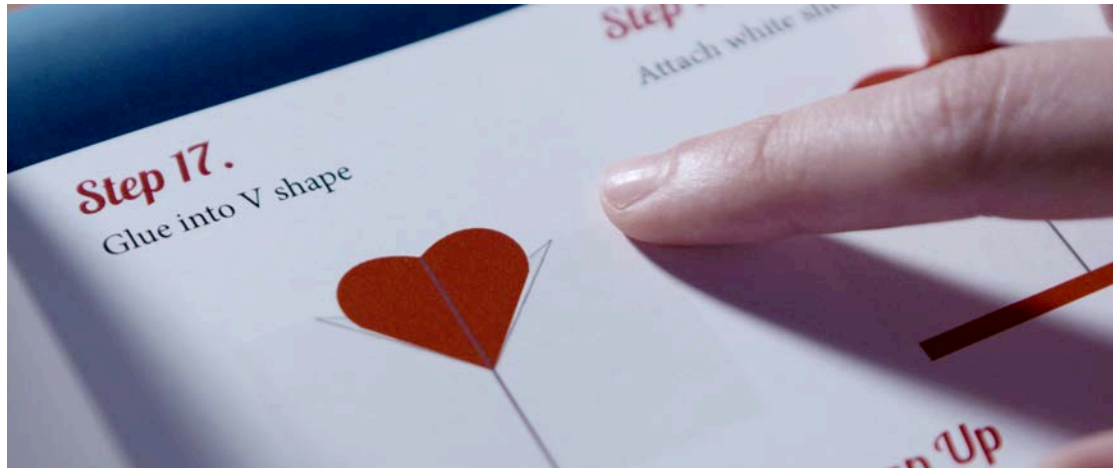
Without permission to shoot, the threat of council interference loomed. Fortunately, the officers don't seem to work past 5pm, so we faced no resistance during night scenes.

This was not the case, however, during the film's crucial collision scene, during which we were asked to leave, or I'd be fined. I wonder why?



With a production that lasted two years, my small budget was not going to last for its entirety. By the time we were filming pick-up shots, I was down to my last few dollars.

At one point, I couldn't even afford to buy nail polish remover for my hand double. Sometimes I wonder how this thing ever got finished.



Towards the end of the shoot, I'd run out of money, so I couldn't afford catering. A friend at a sushi bar came to the rescue, and I procured their daily leftovers. Again mutiny was avoided. Luckily, so too was salmonella poisoning.

### Editing

While most feature film productions have a separate director and editor, or even a team of editors, I edited *Pop-Up* myself. Over 18 months, I battled insufficient processing power, and slowly reduced the footage to a two-hour rough cut.



Some scenes came together easily, while others required meticulous craftsmanship. The latter often resulted from mistakes – directorial lapses caused by the urgency of on-set decision-making.

Neil's proposal video is a good example of this. When almost no extras turned up to be dancers, I had to recruit half of the crew. They couldn't dance, so the resulting footage was lame. But that was actually a good thing, as the video was supposed to have been made by Neil. I made it even worse with cheesy transitions.



*Pop-Up's* first edit dragged – scenes which felt important at script stage went nowhere. Fellow filmmaker Evan Olman, who plays Richie, suggested I could remove 30 minutes. Initially horrified, I eventually came around. Now down to 90 minutes, it really hums along. I simply had to “kill my darlings”.

In paraphrasing Leonardo Da Vinci, the quote that “A movie is never finished, only abandoned” is typically attributed to George Lucas or David Fincher. The sentiment rings true. A movie is completed at the point where the director concedes that nothing else can be fixed, and that he'll just need to live with his mistakes.

The edit was eventually finished/abandoned around April 2015, at which point we transitioned into sound mixing.

### Sound Mixing

While a studio film might have a multi-million dollar sound budget, a government-funded Australian film might still have a budget of \$250,000 for a sound mix. By the time we were at the sound mixing stage, I had nothing.



Luckily Australia's version of community college, TAFE, helped out by providing their facilities plus two of their best students. Both were studying sound mixing, and worked many long hours over 4 months to record and mix *Pop-Up's* dialogue replacement and foley.



The TAFE guys used Pro Tools, then exported layers for me mix in Final Cut Pro. I'm not sure how features are mixed in FCP, but I loved it. I had so much fun creating my first 5.1 surround mix.

In the final stages of mixing, there were jackhammers literally right beneath the suite. We had to raise our voices to speak over it. All I could do was laugh.

### Music

As *Pop-Up's* composer, I chose fingerpicked guitar as the main style of music, simply because that's the instrument I can best express myself with. Luckily I didn't play tuba.

I felt, however, that such music was incongruous to a sunny beach setting, as it connotes central Europe, specifically the Balkans. My solution was to write myself into the script as a busker, "Hamish" to justify the use of such music. Subsequent usage of the music didn't seem so out-of-place, as a context had been established.





The guitar was recorded during a single session by Aria Award-winning producer Rob Taylor, who was also undertaking a PhD at the University of Newcastle at the time.



The music was largely improvised around a few pre-written motifs.



During Neil's story, I opted to include some electronic music. Most of this was written on my laptop during my weekly trips to Sydney to teach film production at the New York Film Academy. As this music featured multiple tracks, they could be spread around the 5.1 sound map giving a greater sense of space.

The score also incorporated music I had written previously under the The Mischief Engine moniker in collaboration with Berlin-based DJ/producer Chopstick. I later remixed one of our tracks, *My Oh My*, to play during the film's resolution montage, just prior to the end credits. The new version incorporated live violin, which was a pleasure to work with.

### Final Thoughts



From the highest of highs to the lowest of lows, from the mountains of Transylvania to the beaches of Australia, *Pop-Up* has been one excellent adventure. As it begins to find its place on the world stage, we're all curious and excited to see what the future holds. And if you enjoy the movie as much as we enjoyed making it – well, you'll probably be tired and cranky, but having the time of your life.