

WAYNE

DIRECTED BY:

Jeremy Sims

PRODUCED BY:

Matthew Metcalfe

Fraser Brown

Running time: 97 Minutes

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LOGLINE:

WAYNE tells the exhilarating story of 1987 World Motorcycle Grand Prix Champion Wayne Gardner's triumphant, improbable journey from a 5-dollar dirt bike to the international summit of his sport.

TAGLINE:

'Guts is everything'

SYNOPSIS

WAYNE is the near improbable true story of 1987 World Motorcycle Champion Wayne Gardner's triumphant journey from riding a \$5 dirt bike to the summit of his global sport. At its heart WAYNE is also a love story, with girlfriend, Donna-Lee Kahlbetzer, never far from the action.

Hailing from the working class town of Wollongong in Australia, Wayne quickly excels in local motorcycle racing. After dropping out of high school and being fired from his tube making apprenticeship, Wayne has to rely on his dogged determination to fulfill his dream. Wayne's bare-knuckle riding style catches the attention of a Japanese team boss and engineer of almost mythical status, Mamoru Moriwaki. Never one to let an opportunity slide, Wayne accepts Moriwaki's invitation to race in England and beyond.

Against all odds, Wayne wins his first race and permanently stamps his name on international motorcycle racing. But the fish-out-of-water Australian desperately misses his girlfriend Donna, who is the cornerstone to his success. With 17 year old Donna at his side, young Wayne climbs the ranks of Grand Prix motorcycle racing quickly. But along with the fame and fortune comes tragedy and trauma and in the sophisticated world of Grand Prix, Wayne clashes with riders who are more calculated and refined than the larrikin kid from Wollongong.

He fulfils his lifelong dream of becoming 500cc World Champion in 1987, however, his good fortune does not last long. Honda redesigns his championship winning bike and Wayne quickly learns it's rife with mechanical problems. Things go from bad to worse when Honda signs Wayne's arch nemesis, Yamaha rider Eddie Lawson, behind his back. Wayne is devastated by what he perceives as Honda's betrayal and arrives at the inaugural Australian Grand Prix at Phillip Island exhausted from a frenzy of media appearances. The odds are stacked against him, but that's when Wayne performs his best. With a roaring crowd of one hundred thousand urging him on, Wayne triumphantly wins the race and hearts of all Australians that day.

Success often means pushing oneself and those around you to the absolute limit. The attributes that allowed Wayne to be a world champion ultimately take their toll on his relationship with Donna, and yet the two remain close friends. Now, as determined as ever, Wayne supports his sons, Remy and Luca, as they begin their own international motorcycle racing careers.

DIRECTOR'S VISION – JEREMY SIMS

WAYNE is a single protagonist feature documentary. I come from a background of narrative feature film-making, with a strong understanding of dramatic structure. All of my films have featured leading men going through a transformative narrative and this story fits that template surprisingly well. This is the strongest correlation between what I have done and what I have set out to achieve on WAYNE.

As far as my personal methodology is concerned, I am guided by the principle of detailed, truthful, emotional storytelling. This philosophy alone precluded the use of 'narration' or any kind of third person overview on the film (except, of course, in the race commentary provided with the archive footage of the actual races). We tell the story from the words of those who can tell it, and then I have attempted to enmesh this 'truthful, personal story' into an allegorical framework. This style, revealed over many projects, both on film and in the theatre, is my signature and was recognised by others before I myself was able to see this pattern in my work.

This allegorical framework works as what musicians call 'counterpoint' – a second melody that seems to be working independently of the first, but as the composition progresses it becomes clear that they are working in tandem, and that the whole is somehow greater than the parts.

We have used archival footage to build that allegorical framework around our protagonist's journey. Thus, the revelation that Australia 'the nation' revealed a new identity during the period that Wayne Gardner fulfilled his private personal destiny should resonate.

The story itself is loosely based around the material in Nick Hartgerink's fond biography, *The Wayne Gardner Story*, and upon several short docs made for television in the 80's and 90's. I then spent considerable time with Wayne (and his son Remy) getting to know him and his competitive personality.

Following an extensive period of research, we travelled the globe interviewing Wayne's competitors, friends, family and enemies, trying to get a rounded picture of the man. Of course, the most vital perspective comes from his former partner and inspiration, Donna Kahlbetzer. Donna provides the insights that allow us to go deeply into the psyche of a racer, an Aussie bloke, and fragile human being. Without her honesty we would have not made the film we have.

Part of my film making methodology is to remain open to ideas and to the combination of seemingly disparate methods in the hope of creating something larger. To that end I have employed the use of 'evolving' Manga images for the evolution of 'Wayne Gardner', motorcycle hero. I grew up watching strange Japanese manga cartoons like *Gigantor* and *Speed Racer*, and since these were the shows that Wayne and his mates would have been watching on Saturday morning TV, we decided to utilize them to tell the story of formative moments in Wayne's life in Wollongong.

Feature Documentary is a new artform for me, and through this process I have been supported and guided by my producers Matthew Metcalfe and Fraser Brown. Alongside their expertise, my editor Tim Woodhouse deserves great credit for guiding this process from start to finish. The finished work is very much a team effort.

THE FILM'S STORY

“Determination and bloody single mindedness can get you anywhere” is the message director Jeremy Sims thinks you should take from the biopic *WAYNE*.

Telling the story of the iconic motorcycle rider and Australian Hero Wayne Gardner was a passion of producer Matthew Metcalfe, himself someone who grew up as a teenager in Australia in the 80's with Gardner as a hero.

“When I was sixteen or seventeen, my mother bought me Nick Hartgerink’s biography of Wayne Gardner and I was enthralled,” says Metcalfe. *“This story of a battler that rose to the top with guts and determination really spoke to me and it’s a story I always remembered into my adult life. As my career progressed I began to think more about this story and eventually (through many twists and turns) managed to find Nick who eventually granted me the rights and helped me connect with Wayne. He was originally disinterested but Wayne eventually came around as a result of Nick’s early and unwavering support (for the project) and a meeting in Wollongong between Wayne and myself”.*

With the rights in hand and Wayne on board, Metcalfe partnered with producer Fraser Brown whose interest in Wayne’s relationships added a fresh dimension to the partnership.

“It was always the dynamic between Wayne and his girlfriend Donna that appealed to me most,” says Brown. *“Bikes are exciting but it’s the human stories that move me. Donna is such a great character and I immediately felt that their relationship would lift the film into something much more than just a motorcycle racing film”.*

Metcalfe and Brown set out to approach a director who could do justice to this pivotal character’s story. A meeting with Australian director Jeremy Sims saw Metcalfe find the right candidate.

“I first met Matthew at the Toronto International Film festival where I had premiered my last project ‘Last Cab to Darwin’,” Says Sims. *“Matthew was refreshingly direct in his approach and his passion for the project, which drew me in. Wayne Gardner was a character I can vividly recall from my youth and the idea of telling the story of that iconic time in Australia’s history was something that appealed.”*

“Given the way Jeremy portrayed the Aussie battler, the mythological Australian in ‘Last Cab to Darwin’, I knew he would get what we were trying to do with WAYNE,” Says Metcalfe. “It was this that lead me to pitch him the idea and he really got it, so the partnership began.”

Growing up in Australia in the 70’s and 80s, Sims was aware of how important Wayne’s achievements were to Australian history.

“I was 21 when Wayne won the World Championship 1987 and I can vividly remember it,” says Sims. “Myself and friends stayed up till 3am to watch it and it really felt like Australians were swept up in it. Everyone I knew was watching and it really felt like it was a turning point for the country, a sort of coming of age that we were on the world stage like this.”

Taking on the project, Sims set to research Gardner and was quick to realise that to make this film there was really one key participant that needed to be on board, Wayne’s long-time girlfriend, Donna-Lee Kahlbetzer.

“I knew that having Donna involved was integral from the beginning,” says Sims. “When reading Nick’s book it’s clear that Donna was very much part of Wayne’s successes and we knew we needed her to be part of the film. I don’t think I expected her to be quite as compelling as she is but as soon as we did the first interview we knew she was the star.”

Producer Fraser Brown talks about how securing her involvement meant the heart of the film.

“There are always challenges in convincing someone to reveal deep personal truths to an audience of strangers,” says Brown. “Donna had far less to gain by being involved with the film than Wayne and she is a very smart, savvy person so it’s fair to say that it took some time to build real trust. Donna was super helpful all the way through but I don’t think she truly relaxed until we showed her the final film.”

THE MAKING OF WAYNE.

With the film in production, Sims travelled to Wayne’s home in Europe to meet with him and his son Remy and began the process of unpacking his story.

“Meeting Wayne was interesting as I wasn’t there to work out if I liked him or not, I had to like him or at least be with him. But the best thing we did was travel to meet with Wayne at his home,” says Sims. “I interviewed him for six hours, none for film, but this meant I knew his good stories. He is a fascinating character, at times seems naive or almost childish, and at other times he is incredibly determined and mature. He can be sort of serious and responsible but he also can be argumentative and funny. He is a tough guy to pin down. I think all the best feature documentary subjects are people that are hard to get to know and Wayne really is that.”

It was this candid insight into his life that set up Sims well as he travelled the world interviewing his comrades and peers for the film.

“Some people love him and some people hate him and that really is who he is,” says Sims. “If you don’t like having your buttons pressed then Wayne will piss you off. He will meet people and very quickly work out what annoys you and then he will do it to get a rise out of you. If you can handle that then you will get on famously”.

“I grew up as a big fan of the World 500cc Championship so to work with these people on a project like this was incredible.” Says Metcalfe, reflecting on the calibre of talent that agreed to be involved in the project. “Getting to have a whole raft of Wayne’s peers involved in the project was fantastic and really ensured we could tell this story properly”

Sims also reflects on how Wayne’s story echoed the growth of Australia at that time and how this overarching theme has made this film more than just a hero’s tale.

“I have a big interest in how Australia grew up” says Sims. “Watching what Australia was and how it changed between 1979 and 1990 was fascinating and Wayne was right in the middle of that. I think the nation grew significantly and showing this in a parallel with Wayne’s journey was something I was really interested in doing”.

Brown also believes that the nature of Wayne’s story and his relentless desire to succeed is universal and a story that can be related to around the world.

“Wayne is about as Aussie as a story gets,” says Brown. “its themes couldn’t be much more universal. Having the guts to follow your dreams no matter what, and being true to yourself

along the way. I've always loved the Wollongong story in the film. 'The Gong' feels like a third lead character. But 'The Gong' could equally have been Henderson or Huntly or Gore or any small town in the USA and the story would still feel as authentic."

With the film completed it has received the honour of premiering at the prestigious Melbourne International Film Festival in 2018. The film will then go onto release across Australia and New Zealand in October 2018 and the rest of world in 2019.

ABOUT THE CAST

WAYNE GARDNER is one of Australia's most successful motorcycle riders and the first Australian to win the prestigious 500cc World Motorcycle Championship in 1987. Born in the small town of Wollongong in New South Wales, Wayne developed an early passion for bike riding. He competed in his first race on a mini bike in 1972 which eventually led him to becoming one of Australia's most decorated motorsports success stories. Wayne was named "ABC Sportsman of the Year", awarded the Member of the Order of Australia (OAM) and named the "Sport Australia Sportsman of the Year in 1987". Then in 1989, the highlight of Wayne's career was his win at the inaugural Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix at Phillip Island. Then, in 1990, against almost impossible odds, Wayne repeated this victory riding with a broken wrist bone as well as a broken fairing. Wayne Gardner announced his retirement from Grand Prix racing in 1992, ending his illustrious career with a win in the 1992 British Grand Prix.

Wayne's career record includes 18 Grand Prix wins and an unequaled four victories in the Suzuka 8 hour Endurance event. From 1993, Wayne commenced his four wheel racing career with the Holden Racing Team with an extensive list of successful years in endurance including the Melbourne Grand Prix, IndyCar, Sensational Adelaide 500km endurance and the 1000km Bathurst endurance, and in 1998 competing for the first time at the Le Mans 24 Hour race in a Riley and Scott LMP1 Ford.

In January 2003 Wayne Gardner retired from motor racing completely and is now enjoying new career challenges including interests in commercial and residential property, agriculture and a successful speaking career. Wayne resides in Europe with his two children Remy and Luca.

DONNA-LEE KAHLBETZER was Wayne Gardner's long-term girlfriend then wife. Born and raised in Albion Park, twenty minutes out of Wollongong, Donna was first set up with Wayne on a blind date after a friend exclaimed he looked like 'a young John Paul Young'. Donna was initially unimpressed by Wayne but soon the pair fell in love and Donna became his 'sidekick', taking a strong role behind the scenes as Wayne rose through the professional grades. In 1981, a few days shy of her 18th birthday, Donna agreed to join Wayne in the United Kingdom as he set to forge his international career. Donna became a central figure right through Wayne's career with many crediting her with his continued success. Donna married Wayne in November of 1989 and the pair were married for five years before divorcing. Donna is now remarried and has two sons.

SHIRLEY AND NORMAN GARDNER are Wayne Gardner's parents. Norman was a truck driver in Wollongong, delivering coal to and from the local mines. Before she had children, Shirley worked as a waitress at a local café. Alongside Wayne, Shirley and Norman had a daughter Vickie. Norman and Shirley were keenly devoted to helping Wayne pursue his dreams giving up much of their free time to travel the country attending races and meets and supporting their beloved boy. Shirley and Norman remained happily married until Shirley sadly passed away on Christmas Day 2016 from a long illness.

ABOUT THE CREW

JEREMY SIMS (Director/Writer) is an award winning writer and director who has worked across feature film, TV and theatre. Jeremy's 2015 screen adaptation of *Last Cab to Darwin* was lauded by critics and loved by audiences while garnering more than \$8 million at the Australian Domestic Box Office. *Last Cab to Darwin* premiered at Toronto International Film Festival in 2015 and after 11 nominations, won Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Actor at the 5th annual AACTA Awards. The film secured a 2016 US theatrical release, and is currently rated at 91% on Rotten Tomatoes.

Jeremy's first feature film *Last Train to Freo* earned considerable success by gaining three AFI award nominations. While his second feature film, the first world war story *Beneath Hill 60*, was a local and worldwide hit, with nominations for 12 AFI awards, including Best Picture and Best Director. The film was officially selected to over a dozen international festivals, and continues to sell strongly on DVD and streaming all around the world.

Jeremy regularly directs for television, most recently directing 6 episodes of the internationally acclaimed melodrama *A Place To Call Home*. Jeremy is currently in pre-production on his latest feature film *Rams* shooting in Western Australia at the end of 2018.

MATTHEW METCALFE (Producer/Writer) is an award winning film and television producer, who has produced more than NZD 200 million worth of productions including 16 feature films, ten tele-features and numerous TV shows, documentaries, TVCs and music videos over two decades in the industry.

Matthew's films have received some sixteen NZ film awards, from over thirty nominations, and have been long-listed for an Oscar, two BAFTA awards and been recognised at film festivals in Cannes, Toronto and London to name but a few. He is the founder of GFC Films, a production company which employs 13 full time industry professionals between Sydney and Auckland.

Recently, Matthew produced Toa Fraser's *6 Days*, the true story of the 1980 Iranian Embassy siege and Roger Donaldson's *McLaren*, a biopic exploring the life and

achievements of legendary Kiwi race car constructor and driver, Bruce McLaren. He is currently producing award winning filmmaker, Leanne Pooley's new film about Artificial Intelligence and Executive Producing *The Dead Lands*, an 8 part TV series with AMC-Shudder based on the feature film of the same name. In post-production Matthew is producing Justin Pemberton's adaptation of the multi-million best-selling book *Capital in the 21st Century* and Bryn Evans' new film about IndyCar drivers, *Born Racer*, for Universal Pictures.

Matthew holds a Bachelor of Commerce in Management and Applied Mathematics from the University of Auckland and an Advanced Diploma in History from Oxford University.

FRASER BROWN (Producer) is an award-winning creative producer and professional actor from Auckland, New Zealand, with more than 20-years experience in the industry.

Fraser has produced award-winning commercial and short film content since his first short, *Dead Letters*, premiered at the Telluride Film Festival, in 2006. His first feature, *Orphans & Kingdoms*, won numerous international festival awards and was released theatrically in New Zealand in 2016 with 4-star reviews and critical praise.

In 2016 Fraser produced, in partnership with Matthew Metcalfe of General Film Corporation, his first feature documentary, *McLaren*. Directed by Roger Donaldson and endorsed by the McLaren company, the film was the highest grossing New Zealand film at the NZ box office in 2017 and was released globally by Universal Pictures, Transmission Films and Gunpowder & Sky.

Fraser is currently executive producing two feature documentaries for Universal Pictures, produced by Matthew Metcalfe; *Born Racer* - on Kiwi IndyCar champion, Scott Dixon, directed by Bryn Evans, and *A.I.* - on the risks and opportunities of Artificial Intelligence, directed by Leanne Pooley. He is also an EP on TV shows; *The Dead Lands* - an 8 part series for the AMC-Shudder based on the feature film of the same name, and the fourth series of award-winning female-lead millennial comedy, *Auckland Love*, for TVNZ.

Fraser has a BA in Acting from Toi Whakaari - NZ Drama School and a BCom in Finance and Marketing from the University of Otago. Prior to focusing on film and television full-time

he helped to build, and eventually sell, the award-winning, international mineral water brand, Waiwera.

TIM WOODHOUSE (Editor/Writer) has been an editor for over 20 years. He is a natural born storyteller and loves the process of sifting through hours of footage to find story 'gold'. While he is a documentary specialist, he has also cut TV drama, commercials, comedy, music videos, short films and dance films. He won 'Best Drama Editor' at the 2002 NZ Television Awards for *Staunch* and 'Best Documentary Editor' at the NZ Screen Awards 2005 for *Haunting Douglas*.

In 2006, he was a finalist in the documentary editing category of the NZ Screen Awards and the Australian Screen Editors Guild Awards for his work on *The Promise* and the NZ Television Awards for *Elgar's Enigma*. Documentary projects include *Coffee, Tea or Me* (with Brita McVeigh and Gaylene Preston), *Haunting Douglas*, *The Promise and Try Revolution* (with Leanne Pooley), *Sheilas: 28 Years On and Elgar's Enigma* (with Annie Goldson), the much-awarded *Topp Twins*, *Untouchable Girls*, *Beyond The Edge* (about Hillary on Everest), and animated film *25 April*.

JAMES BROWN (Editor) is an award winning editor who has spent the last decade editing for top documentary directors. James won the Moa for Best Documentary Editing with Annie Goldson in 2013. Alongside his work as an editor he has also directed documentaries in the US, NZ, Japan, Tanzania, UK and France with his documentary "*Red, White Black & Blue*" winning Best Documentary at ICF.

Jame's also an award Winning Game Developer and his game 'wOmp' was one of Apple's "Best New Games" and has over 50k downloads.

STEVE ARNOLD (Director of Photography) is a DOP credited on *Last Cab to Darwin* (where he also worked with director Jeremy Sims), Kiwi film *Separation City* and TV shows such as *Police Rescue* and *McLeod's Daughters*. Steve has also worked on *Disgrace* starring John

Malkovich which premiered at the 2008 Toronto International Film Festival where it was awarded the Prize of the International Critics.

DAVID LONG (Composer) is a composer, performer and producer responsible for the scores of some of New Zealand's biggest films. His credits include *McLaren*, *Six Days*, *25 April*, *The Ground We Won*, *The Lovely Bones* and *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*. He is also founding member of the seminal New Zealand band 'The Mutton Birds' with whom he made 3 albums over 7 years.

Long is currently teaching film composition at Victoria University in Wellington and is composing the score for a film on artificial intelligence by Leanne Pooley.

TOM BLACKWELL (Researcher) graduated from RMIT's renowned film program in 2016, where his short drama film was selected in the top 10 short films of the year. After graduating, Tom hit the ground running and joined GFC Films in late 2016 as a researcher on their new feature documentary about Wayne Gardner. Tom has been involved in all stages of research and production of the film in Wollongong, Sydney and Auckland.

While at GFC Films, Tom has also worked as a fixer at the 24 Hours of Le Mans race during filming of the upcoming feature documentary *Born Racer*, Bryn Evans' new film about IndyCar drivers for Universal Pictures. Blackwell was also awarded a scholarship by RMIT to produce a short documentary in Cambodia about an NGO transforming the lives of local abuse victims .

LEELA MENON (Line Producer) practised as a corporate lawyer for over a decade before entering the film industry in 2008. Since then she has produced and executive produced numerous award winning commercials, short films and web series, and line produced feature films and documentaries. She is currently line producing two other feature documentaries for GFC Films which are to be distributed by Universal Pictures: *Born Racer* about Kiwi IndyCar champion, Scott Dixon, and his team Chip Ganassi Racing, directed by Bryn Evans and produced by Matthew Metcalfe; and a feature documentary which discusses the rise of artificial intelligence, directed by Leanne Pooley and produced by Matthew Metcalfe.

Leela has a LLB(Hons)(I) from the University of Canterbury.

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