



# EXISTENCE

It's not until you destroy everything that you find out what is real.

**Existence is a post-apocalyptic drama. Trapped behind the Boundary Fence, Freya dreams of freedom and pursues a mysterious outsider who can free her. Condemned by her desires she destroys her world to discover that the reality of her existence was not what she imagined.**



'Existence' is the story of a woman, Freya, who is trapped in a dying world she cannot escape. Set many years from now, the earth is submerged under a toxic ocean and the last remaining land mass barely support the survivors. Freya's family salvages what little remains in a land where they live, effectively, as prisoners. An immense electric fence powered by wind turbines keeps the family shut off from the world beyond. Enigmatic Boundary Riders guard the fence and prevent crossings. Freya believes her only hope for freedom lies with a Boundary Rider who also yearns for something he cannot have. Determined to cross the Fence she seduces the Rider, the consequences are disastrous for her family. When she finally sees the other side she discovers that the reality of her existence was not what she imagined.

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**FREYA** Loren Taylor (Horsely)

# EXISTENCE

In the future the oceans rise to engulf the continents and submerged cities leach toxic waste destroying marine life. The Earth's resources are reduced to waste and what little remains is on the verge of depletion. Threatened with extinction, boat loads of survivors cross the ocean looking for land. An immense electric fence powered by wind turbines is built to contain an isolated peninsula protecting the inhabitants from the refugees. Boundary Riders segregate themselves from their community to patrol the fence line, ensuring that the elite few outside are protected. Generations later, the unwanted refugees become prisoners trapped between the fence and a poisonous ocean. The Boundary Riders become a law unto themselves. Their people are destitute and little more than nomadic savages tagged by the Riders in an effort to control the population.

FREYA, DANIEL and their two children live in a cement bunker, under the control of Daniel's domineering father ROBERT. They subsist on the limited food they are able to grow in a barren soil and the rare pests that Freya is able to hunt. The family siphons electricity from the fence to provide the necessary heat to survive the coming freeze. The growing tension between Freya and Robert at the Homestead further threatens their survival. Trapped in a world where she doesn't fit, Freya dreams of escaping the confines of their fragile existence.

A BOUNDARY RIDER kills to protect the integrity of the fence. The fence shorts out when an Outlander is electrocuted during an attempted crossing. The resultant power outage at the Homestead forces Robert to reveal that there is a gate. Freya and Daniel travel to a remote part of the fence to repair the connection. Freya finds a tag from one of the Outlanders but does not know its purpose. Their convertor is discovered by the Boundary Rider who follows them back to their Homestead and watches them from a distance. Robert denies any knowledge of the purpose of the tag but Freya grows suspicious that he hides something.

Freya is drawn to the gate but cannot find a way to cross. She discovers horse tracks and suspects that a Rider is watching them. She makes contact with him at the fence and inadvertently lures him back to the Homestead. She is intrigued when the Rider returns to watch her at the Homestead yet does not threaten her family. Rider sets up camp in an abandoned bunker unable to resist what he cannot have. When the Boundary Rider returns again, Freya seduces him.

Freya goes hunting again secretly meeting with the Boundary Rider. She comes to realise that the Rider will not betray his code of honor and allow her to cross. Her determination to see the other side consumes her. Convinced that he can have a life inside the fence, Rider approaches the family with food to share. Robert and Rider recognise each other and to the family's surprise he left him in. Rider declares his intention to claim Robert's family as his own. Robert will not submit and Rider is driven from the Homestead by the family.

Freya sneaks out of the Homestead and goes to the gate. She calls for Rider and pleads with him to let her through. When Daniel discovers Freya's absence Robert is forced to reveal that he used to be a Boundary Rider. Devastated by the revelation, Daniel leaves to find his wife. He arrives as Rider takes Freya through the gate. During the standoff Daniel shoots and kills Rider. Freya leaves Daniel to finally see what lies beyond the fence. She stares out at the horror of a world that she could not have imagined. She flees in terror back to the gate but cannot configure the lock. Freya is trapped on the wrong side of the fence. Daniel returns home to beat Robert and force him to reveal the key to the gate lock.

Freya spends a fearful night with nothing but the body of her dead lover to protect her. At sunrise Robert opens the gate and allows Freya to return home. Freya is filled with despair over what she now knows of the world. Despite her betrayal, Daniel comforts her. They sit together as they wait for the Boundary Riders to come and take their revenge over the death of their comrade.



SCRAPS Thomasin McKenzie SETH Peter McKenzie



ROBERT Peter McCauley



DANIEL Gareth Reeves



The Homestead, Belmont Regional Park, WWII Bunker





The Fence, West Wind Farm, Makara





RIDER Matt Sunderland







BROTHER Aaron Jackson





West Wind Farm, Makara



Production Designer Philip Thomas



The Beach Hunt, Waikawa Beach



West Wind Farm, Makara



Director Juliet Bergh with Cast



## EXISTENCE – Directors Statement.

Film making was not something I planned. My day job is as General Practitioner. Books and film were a means of escape not an ambition. When I first started writing I was thrilled by the wonder of it. The possibilities seemed only limited by your ability to stretch your mind. And when a vision comes along that is strong enough you willingly let it take you over like 'Existence' did to me. When The New Zealand Film Commission launched the Escalator scheme it gave me the rare opportunity as a first time director to realise a feature length film.

The collaborative nature of film making has meant that my relative inexperience had the benefit of drawing on the rich well of film makers within Wellington that makes this capital such an exciting creative environment. A film is a sum of its parts and the people that have contributed to the making of 'Existence' have shown what is possible with limited resources but impressive commitment. One of the strengths of Production was the early involvement of key creatives. Notably, the script was co-written with my Director of Photography, Jessica Charlton, lending a unique perspective to the film from a very early stage. The story concept was also developed with the early involvement of Production Designer, Philip Thomas. This provided the support necessary to find clever solutions to solve some of the challenges of making an ambitious film on a low budget. Invaluable script consultation came from the late Graeme Tetley, remembered for iconic films such as 'Vigil' and 'Out of the Blue'. Working with Graeme was instrumental in making this film possible. He was a wonderful example of the generosity and extraordinary talent of the local film community.

'Existence' is a story that grew out of the landscape near my home in Wellington. The maritime weather pattern batters these big open landscapes offering a rich environment for the imagination. It is wild, desolate and shadows the city as if to declare itself as the true identity of Wellington. It offers up wind turbines, isolated coast lines, abandoned WW2 bunkers – all these elements that were just sitting there waiting for someone to create a story from them. International productions are drawn to New Zealand for its fantastical quality. With the benefit of local knowledge, 'Existence' takes that quality and reinterprets it as post apocalyptic. This is done without altering features of the landscape but rather incorporating what is present into the story. The story and characters started to write themselves. With a bit of imagination Wellington became a post apocalyptic world where civilization is not destroyed by a sudden catastrophic event but by insidious decay.

*“I don't believe another world is possible, because I know that all things  
superseded stick around and stink - unwelcome reminders with which we  
have to deal. So another world is necessary but only built from the gutted  
hull of this one.”* Evan Calder Williams, salvagepunk theorist / author

(Speaking at the 2010 Historical Materialism Conference).

Existence was inspired by a salvagepunk western aesthetic – a hybrid that was conceived to help meet the challenge of low budget filmmaking. Salvagepunk is a post-apocalyptic vision of the future developed by theorist Evan Calder Williams (author of 'Combined and Uneven Apocalypse') and poetically described by him as 'a graveyard smile'. This is an image that has stuck with me as an incredibly poignant image of futile hope. The salvage punk concept provided a template for key creatives on which to base the tone and vision of the film. The aesthetic takes a minimalistic and idiosyncratic reinterpretation of discarded objects that makes the familiar unfamiliar. The knack of making do with what you've got is what gives this film its unique quality. This inventiveness resonates with the number eight wire mentality that is the ingenuity of New Zealander film makers.

'Existence' has the cinematic style of the graphic novel. We use techniques of the Western to dramatize the landscape. The balance of the composition between land and sky is manipulated to accentuate the contrasting moods between the Homestead and the Fence. To heighten the oppressive quality of Freya's home life, the sky is limited to a third of the frame composition and planes are kept horizontal. Inversely, the sky dominates when she enters the world of the Boundary Riders with the strong vertical lines of the turbines and fence. 'Existence' was visualised with the diffused light of a whited out sky. A

majority of the scenes are exterior and use lighting techniques such as negative fill and reflectors to maximise available natural light. Twilight and night time scenes are filmed using cost effective day for night techniques which matches the intended visual style of cool tones. This is not a world with abundant energy and interior lighting reflects that. Interiors take advantage of the shaft of sunlight from a window, an open door or the glow of a heating lamp. Low key lighting is used to accentuate the mood and obscure the set which is sparse and thus imminently suitable to this world.

Production design reflects a reductive style which is consistent with the circumstances of the characters and their world. This translates to props and interiors by removing unnecessary clutter and taking a minimalistic approach. Props are made and refashioned out of found objects. Interiors are functional, frugal and costumes non decorative. The punk of salvagepunk is not the mohawked pierced flouting society or the idealised imagery of steampunk. There are no dreadlocks or pilot goggles. The actual interior of a WWII bunker is used rather than a studio to create a realism that is a tough environment to film in but pays off with incredible visuals.

'Existence' has a quiet mood and a gradual pace that steadily builds. It favors observation over action, shifting the focus to character and relationships. Dialogue is minimized allowing the characters to reveal themselves through the choices they make. Although dialogue is minimal this is not a quiet film. Sound design has been an active process from the time of script writing. Our Sound Designer, Nic McGowan, embraced the salvagepunk concept and fashioned a fully functional record player from a food blender. Sound solutions during post production has resulted in fascinating electronic inventions and unconventional special effects recordings to achieve our unique soundscape. Tension is created with sound design by enhancing and manipulating the environmental sounds. The wind and storm takes on particular moods within each scene so that the absence of it creates it's own disquiet. The sound of the coming freeze is closer with every moment creating its own drama within the sound design. The pulse of the fence provides the percussive beat of the musical score composed by the very talented Grayson Gilmore. Low frequency content adds to the disquiet. The music holds the world and allows you to feel the experience without telling you what to feel.

In Existence the landscape is appreciated as a character. But the landscape would be nothing without the human characters that inhabit it. The destructive nature of the interpersonal relationships in the story is fuelled by a hostile environment where survival is a daily struggle. The landscape constitutes the character's identity and isolation both within their physical environment and from each other. It is used to heighten the mood of their story. But the real drama of the world is within the family. There is an overwhelming loneliness for each of the characters. The question keeps being asked as to where you belong. You must be one thing and not another. You must choose your side. But their identity is based on a lie. To achieve a complete sense of self the characters would risk exposing themselves to condemnation.

All the roles you can take as a woman whether mother, wife, lover, provider, are fragmented within our heroine, Freya. She is stunted by a dead world with nothing to dream of but a non-existent freedom. Freya is the flawed heroine who questions the reality of her existence. She is a retelling of the myth of Pandora and Eve. The truth of her world is kept from her yet frustratingly accessible. She cannot accept ignorance but knowledge brings consequences that redefines her world in a way she did not expect. Her curiosity destroys the people she loves.

*Old friend, you may kneel as you read this,  
for now I come to the sweet burden of my argument.  
I did not know what I had to tell you, but now I know.  
I did not know what I wanted to proclaim, but now I am sure.  
All my speeches were preface to this, all my exercises but a clearing of my throat.  
I confess I tortured you but only to draw your attention to this.  
I confess I betrayed you but only to tap your shoulder.  
In our kisses and sucks, this, ancient darling, I meant to whisper.*

Leonard Cohen. "Beautiful Losers"

Robert, the antagonist, has no patience for what he sees as Freya's selfishness. Robert hides a secret past that proves that his life on the inside of the Fence is based on a lie. He is revealed to be the very enemy that he has taught his family to fear. By protecting his family from his past he risks losing them through his deceit. Daniel, her husband, is dominated by the strong personalities of his father and wife. He lives under the shadow of Robert unable to become the man Freya needs him to be. He is misjudged by Freya and undermined by Robert. Caught between their hostilities, his attempts to keep the peace further alienate him from Freya. Only when he discovers his father's lies is he able to break free. He finally takes control of his own life but by then it is too late.

The cavalry officer and the gun fighter are merged to create Rider who remains the characteristic stoic, independent anti-hero. Rider is a military man who lives only to serve the Fence. His life is one of self sacrifice and loneliness. When we meet Rider he has become discontented with his role as a guard. The distinction between hero becomes blurred. He struggles to maintain his code of honor while pursuing his personal desires. Rider naively believes he can find a place in Freya's life, on the inside of the Fence, but he ultimately realises he has no place in her world. Rider sacrifices his love for Freya and returns to his lonely existence patrolling the Fence. Yet for Freya he will break his code of honor, destroy himself, and cause his lover to be condemned.

The Boundary Rider's separation from the inhabitants of the Peninsula is so complete that their language has diverged. 'Rider Speak' creates a barrier to maintain the secrecy and mythology of the Boundary Riders and the Fence. To create a new dialect we enlisted the combined efforts of linguistics scholars Dr Peter Petrucci and Dr Martin Paviour-Smith from Massey University. The resultant 'Rider Speak' is recognisably of English origin but predicts its possible evolution. There remains a limited mutual understanding between 'Rider Speak' and English.

'Existence' is a unique retelling of some of the world's oldest stories. It is a imagined vision of the future drawing on the threat of global warming and fear of environmental catastrophe. It explores how the world would be if we allowed our current rate of consumption to go unchecked. Through the limitations of low budget film making we drew our strength by finding novel ways to create our story. 'Existence' is very much a New Zealand story reflecting the fortitude and ingenuity of people who have adapted to a harsh climate in isolation.





MAARTEN HOLL/ The Dominion Post

## Futuristic Kiwi dialect on film

AMANDA FISHER

**Last updated 05:00 27/04/2011 Dominion Post/Stuff**

**STRANGE NEW WORLD:** Actors in bed, from left, Thomasin McKenzie, Loren Taylor and Peter McKenzie, during filming of *Existence* which features the futuristic Kiwi dialect developed by two Massey University linguists.

A new film set in a futuristic New Zealand features an evolved Kiwi dialect invented by two Massey University lecturers. The linguistics lecturers, Martin Paviour-Smith and Peter Petrucci, have developed futuristic dialect Rider-speak for the "salvage punk Western" movie *Existence*. It is now being filmed in Wellington and stars Out of the Blue's Matthew Sunderland, and Loren Taylor from *Eagle vs Shark*.

Co-producer Mhairead Connor said Rider-speak conveyed the sense of a "strange new world", set about 500 years in the future.

The film, funded by the New Zealand Film Commission, is due to be released early next year. Dr Paviour-Smith said there were elements of the created dialect, which totalled about 100 words, which "might be worth putting your money on" as future accent trends for New Zealand. "We can predict to a certain degree what it might sound like in the future, but actually when you put on that accent ... people find it comical."

The pair introduced other elements to make the accent less comical and to fit in with the film, he said. Although some words would be difficult to pick, context and repetition meant the meaning of dialogue was discernable, which was important as the film-makers did not want to use sub-titles. In the film, some inhabitants had been isolated from the main population for several generations. The language was plausible because the film involved a catastrophe that could have an impact on speech, Dr Paviour-Smith said. The scripting accentuated other trends already existing in the language, such as changing the "i" sound to more like "oi". Others accentuated the use of the letter "r" in the dialect. "In New Zealand, apart from in Southland, we don't say "r" very well, so it's quite shocking to hear it." American-born Peter Petrucci said they drew from different inspirations in creating the language.

"[It is] a product of our imagination, informed a little bit by what we know is happening in New Zealand English [and] a little bit by what we know is happening in language ... in a general sense."

Dr Petrucci did not rule out expanding the dialect if it proved popular.

"We'll see if New Zealanders start using it like [Star Trek language] Klingon." Until then, the two linguists were able to use their "own little twin language – especially the obscenities"

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Screen grabs from EXISTENCE



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# EXISTENCE

**Based on a concept by** Juliet Bergh, Jessica Charlton and Philip Thomas

**Written by** Juliet Bergh and Jessica Charlton

**Director** Juliet Bergh

**Editor** Simon Price

**Sound Design** Nic McGowan

**Composer** Grayson Gilmour

**Production Designer/Art Direction** Philip Thomas

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**Costume Design** Kate Trafford

**Casting** Tina Cleary - The Casting Company

Cast

FREYA Loren Taylor

ROBERT Peter McCauley

DANIEL Gareth Reeves

RIDER Matt Sunderland

BROTHER Aaron Jackson

SCRAPS Thomasin McKenzie

SETH Peter McKenzie,

LEEWAN Rachel Roberts

WIMA Gentiane Lupi

BLOR Richard Freeman



**credit rolls from here**

**Script Advisor** Graeme Tetley

**Dialect** Peter Petrucci and Martin Paviour-Smith Massey University

**Associate Producer** David Norris

**Prod Asst/Trainee/Runner** Jess McNamara

**Prod Assist/WD** Brigid Connor

**Graphic Design/Concept Art** Nick Keller

**Production Accountant** Lyndsay Wilcox

**Director of Photography** Jessica Charlton

**DOP/1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Camera** Aline Tran

**1st Assistant Camera** Kirk Pflaum

**1st Assistant Camera** Matt Tuffin

**2nd Assistant Camera** Marty Lang

**2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant Camera** Josh Obrien

**Video Assistant** Laetitia Belen

**Video Assistant** Shane Catherall

**First AD** David Norris

**3AD/Occasional First AD** Dan Lynch

**Chaperone** Miranda Harcourt and Stuart McKenzie

**Production Designer** Philip Thomas

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**Standby Props:** Ryan Roche

**Set Dresser:** Ryle Burden

**Prop Buyers:** Ryan Roche, Ryle Burden

**Propmakers:** Izzat Design Ltd

**Propmaking Assistant:** Yohann Viseur

**Record Player Propmaker:** Nic McGowan

**Art Dept Assistants:** Shane Catherall, Ian Middleton, Tom Mchattie,  
Amohia Dudding, Ivan Rooda

**Art Dept Mentor:** Joe Bleakley

**Thanks to:** Chris Streeter, Russell Murray

**Armourer** Hamish Bruce

**Horse Wranglers Safety Officer** Hero Animals Caroline Girdlestone

**Horses/Assistant Wrangler** Monique Drake

**Rider's Horse** Awhi

**Companion/Safety Horse** Kohana

**Brother's Horse** Vader

**Rider Double/Existence Super Hero** Mark Kinaston-Smith

**Costume Design** Kate Trafford

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**Costume Assistant** Kristiina Ago

**Make Up/Special Effects Design** Tess Tickle

**Make Up Assist** Chrystal McDonald

**Script Supervisor** Karen Alexander

**Sound Recordist** Nic McGowan

**Boom Operator** Dylan Jauslin

**Sound Assist/Onset Trainee** Nick Tapp

**Gaffer** Andy Rennie

**Grip** Graeme Tuckett

**Grip/Lx Asst** Ray Eagle, Buddy Rennie

**Stunt Co-ord** Augie Davis, Shane Rangi, Justin Carter

**Safety Report** Scene Safe Rob Fullerton Gibbo

**VFX Supervisor** Frank Reuter OHUfx

**VFX/Matte Painting** Felicity Moore

**Unit Manager** Hamish McDonald-Bates **Unit Services** Gabe Page

**Unit Assist** Zoe Studd

**Catering** Blue Carrot

**EPK/Stills** Nick Swinglehurst

**Assembly Editor** Paul Wedel, Gretchen Peterson

**Titles** Brendan Dee

**Foley Artist** Rosemary Grose

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**Unique Foley** Sergio

**Sound Design Assist** Joel Anscombe Smith & Jess McNamara

**Sound Design Facility** Island Bay Studios

**Sound Design Assistance** Underground Sound Phil Burton, Darren Maynard

**Post Production Facilities Provided by** Park Road Post Production, Wellington, New Zealand

**Head of Production** Dean Watkins

**Head of Picture** David Hollingworth

**Facilities Producer** Nina Kurzmann

**DI Editor** Tim Willis

**DI Colourist** Clare Burlinson

**Re-recording Mixer** Gilbert Lake, Tim Chaproniere

**Deliverables** Matt Wear, Victoria Chu

**DI Workflow Manager** Tony Pratt

**General Manager** Cameron Harland

**Head of Marketing** Vicki Jackways

**Post Production Co-ordinator** Alison Ingram



**Hero Fence Build** Pyradeck Scaffolding Limited John Clarke, Bryan

**Camera** Rocket Rentals

**Grip/Lx** Brightlights

**Insurance** Crombie Lockwood

**Legal** Peter Connor

**Locations**

Makara West Wind Farm, Meridian - Cathleen Canavan, Mike Ohs, Russell Thomas and the Drake family farm

Belmont Regional Park, Greater Wellington Regional Council, Cat Wylde and Jeremy Paterson , Wayne Harrison

**Waikawa Beach** Horowhenua District Council Philip Lake.

**Waikawa Dunes** **The Walker Family**

**Film Wellington** Nicci Lock

**Mentors:**

**Producer Mentor** Leanne Saunders, Vicky Pope **Director Mentor** Mike Smith **Archery Expert** Neil Randell **DP/Cam Op Mentor** Phil Burchell, Rob Marsh and John Chrisstoffels **Prod Design Mentor** Joe Bleakley

**NZ Film Commision** Thanks to Chris Payne, Bonnie Slater, Sarah Allerby, Graeme Mason, James Thompson and Jasmin McSween

**Existence I – XXV'**

**Written, performed, recorded and pre-mixed** Grayson Gilmour at Austin Towers

**Featuring** Charles Davenport – Cello, Tristan Carter – Violin

**Mixed and stemmed** Mike Gibson at Munki Audio, [MUNKI.CO.NZ](http://MUNKI.CO.NZ)

**All Grayson Gilmour music © 2012 Native Tongue Music Publishing Ltd**

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<b>Producers</b> Mhairead Connor and Melissa Dodds
----------------------------------------------------

EXISTENCE was shot on RED Mx One, Finished to HDCam. 2.33:1 aspect ratio, 84 mins and in 5.1 surround

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Director Juliet Bergh with “Scraps” Thomasin MacKenzie

### Director/Writer Juliet Bergh

Juliet Bergh is a 35 year old emerging filmmaker who is the director and co-writer of *Existence*. She came to New Zealand seven years ago during a working holiday and fell in love with the country.

Juliet now proudly identifies herself as a New Zealander. Juliet has been a keen amateur stills photographer from childhood when her father handed her a fully manual camera. At this time, film making was not a field that she was exposed to as a possible career choice. Following the recession of the 1990's you chose a career based on employability. So with that advice in mind she studied nursing. After a year of working in the outback of Queensland she went back to University to study medicine. Her time as a rural scholarship holder exposed her to people and places that few experience. Dissatisfied with medicine, she came to New Zealand in 2003 and renewed her interest in photography. Juliet remained active in the creative arts while working part-time as a General Practitioner. In 2008 she started studying creative arts at The Learning Connexion. It was here that she became addicted to filmmaking at a videography class given by Zoe McIntosh. For the next year she volunteered family and friends to crew her short film and music video experiments. She had found her passion. Determined to make a career of filmmaking, she enrolled at the New Zealand Film and Television School in 2009. Initially she thought to translate her interest in photography to cinematography. She soon found that directing took full advantage of all her accumulated skills and years of inadvertent training. She kept herself busy that year with extra curricular activities, directing 48 hour film competition entry *Raising Cane*. She achieved success as one of fifteen finalist in Handal the Jandal with music video *Mouse*. Juliet finished her film school year as writer for graduation short film *Scrap Heap* and director for *Putangitangi*.

In 2010 Juliet formed a collaborative relationship with cinematographer Jessica Charlton. She wrote and directed *The Grey* a self funded short film project shot on 16 mm. The collaboration worked so well that when Escalator was launched they co-wrote their first feature, *Existence*. Passionate about the story and determined to realise the film, Juliet is committed to seeing *Existence* on screen.



### **Writer/DOP Jessica Charlton**

Jessica Charlton is 34 years old and is the director of photography and co-writer of *Existence*.

After leaving her hometown, Invercargill when she was 18, Jessica lived and studied philosophy in Dunedin for two years before making her way to Wellington. In 2001 Jessica enrolled as one of the first students at the Massey University school of fine arts. It was here that Jessica spent the next five years, specialising in photography and video art. It was also during this time that Jessica brought her two children, Curtis and Nina into the world. Jessica found motherhood and part time study to be mutually beneficial and in 2005 Jessica completed her bachelor of fine arts. In her final year, Jessica made two video installations which explored themes of futurism and apocalypse. These obsessions continue to haunt Jessica and are present in the script for *Existence*.

Keen to continue expanding her skill set, Jessica could not keep away from university for long. In 2006 she started a graduate diploma in film studies, which included scriptwriting and film production. Although Jessica had an inkling that she wanted to be a director of photography, after experiencing the collaborative process of film making it became certain that cinematography was her calling in life.

Jessica has worked on numerous short films in the camera and lighting departments. Collaborating with the team *Traces of Nut*, she was the director of photography on *Free Range* and *Longdrummer*, two films which made it to the Wellington finals of the 48 hour film competition. Passionate about creating provocative images, Jessica is also interested in the philosophy of cinematic representation. On this topic, Jessica's has written a research paper titled *Looking for Hope: Dystopia and the Cinematic Sublime*. Jessica worked as a photography tutor at the school of design, Victoria University in 2007 before she moved into a full time job as the technician at the New Zealand Film and Television School. The Film School is a hub of creativity and is fully supportive of Jessica's determination to bring *Existence* to the screen.



### **Mhairead Connor Producer**

Mhairead is a passionate and committed producer with a long track record in low budget production and credits across a wide range of television, multi-media, short film and digital feature film projects. Between 2006 and 2010 she ran renowned Wellington production company Sticky Pictures, producing four seasons of the award winning arts-series *The Gravy* and many other projects while there.

She was an elected member of the SPADA executive from 2007-2009. Prior to this she worked for a number of film related government and non-government organizations including SPADA and The New Zealand Screen Council. In 2004 she devised and produced a film festival featuring the work of non mainstream New Zealand filmmakers including Florian Habicht, Gregory King and Campbell Walker. The same year she produced her first micro-budget feature film *Little Bits of Light* with director Campbell Walker.

Mhairead is in pre-production for sci-fi short film “UFO” written and to be directed by Gregory King in 2013.

### **Melissa Dodds Producer**

As a Producer and Production Manager, Melissa Dodds’ credits include Patrick Gillies’ television comedies, *Oswald Gold: Australia’s #1 Motivational Expert* and *Liberation Force*. She has produced numerous short films, including Patrick Gillies’ *Kitty* which has been selected for over fifteen international film festivals including a world premiere at the Montreal World Film Festival and Production Managed Zoe Macintosh’s Qantas Best Short Film Finalist *Day Trip*. Melissa has worked as a Production Manager for Animal Planet/Natural History New Zealand’s 13-part documentary series, *Buggin’ With Ruud*, a Production Secretary on the Cloud 9 TV series, *Revelations*, and a Production Co-ordinator on the feature film, *Meet Me In Miami*. In addition to this, she was Associate Producer on Patrick Gillies’ digital/16mm Feature film *Offensive Behaviour*, which premiered at the 2006 Cannes Marché du Film and Line Producer with Producer Leanne Saunders on Paul Campion’s Debut Feature *The Devils Rock* released through Vendetta Films in 2011 and is nominated for Best Visual Effects, Best Costume Design and Makeup Design at the 2012 SUNFA’s. Melissa has worked as a Production Manager for Weta Workshop in Miramar, Wellington; Sticky Pictures on the latest thirteen-themed-episode series *The Gravy IV* for TVNZ7 and various projects. Melissa’s shortfilm *Whakatiki* had its world premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival in April 2012, since having gone on to attend a further 13x festivals and is nominated for Best Short Film, Best Actress and Best Actor at the 2012 NZ Film Awards SUNFA’s. Melissa is developing further short film, television, documentary, tv series and feature film projects. Melissa is a member of WIFT Wellington, NZ and has been awarded a Producer Mentorship to assist her Producer development and attended Clermont Ferrand Film Festival and Short Film Market as an Intern Producer in Feb 2012.

## **Philip Thomas Production Designer**

Philip is a freelance designer and film maker who lives in Wellington, New Zealand. Born in Nelson, he moved to Auckland in to study architecture but whilst there became increasingly interested in theatre and film. After graduation he worked for Nigel Cook Architects, whose deeply philosophical approach contributed to Philip returning to University where he completed a Masters degree in architecture and narrative theory. Film became the perfect vehicle for his creative expression as it let him combine his design skills with his interest in utilising visual elements in story telling. His spare time passions include board-game design, history and science fiction.

After a decade working as a designer on films such as; The Lord of The Rings trilogy, The Matrix sequels, The Last Samurai, and King Kong he embarked on a Phd about design and film. Suspending his studies to work on the film 'Tintin' at Weta Digital he subsequently had his first role as Production Designer on the film 'Existence'. In 2011 he co-won the 48hr Film Competition National award for Art Direction, and in 2012 has made his first short film as a writer/director.

## Starring

### LOREN TAYLOR as FREYA



Loren Taylor (nee Horsley) won attention after starring in geek romance *Eagle vs Shark*, as a shy, overadoring fast food worker (based on a character she created). Taylor's movie debut was four years earlier, in road movie *Kombi Nation*; she helped write the script. Inbetween, she appeared on *Insider's Guide to Happiness*, *Xena*, fantasy *Atlantis High*, and *The Strip*. In Gaylene Preston doco *Lovely Rita*, she plays painter Rita Angus.

### GARETH REEVES as DANIEL



Gareth Reeves won a 2006 NZ Screen award for his performance as a lonely baker in *The Insiders Guide to Love*. Other television work includes *The Cult*, *Go Girls*, *The Man who lost his Head*, *Legend of the Seeker* and *Underbelly: A tale of two Cities* and short films *The Handover* and *Dead Letters*. Gareth has also starred in feature films, as a reforming druggie (*A Song of Good*, for which he was also nominated for a Qantas Film award) a crime writer (*I'm Not Harry Jensen*) a British Cavalry Major (*Tracker*), arctic environmentalist (*Ice*) and an alien Wilberforce (*Under the Mountain*). Gareth is also an experienced theatre actor and since *Existence* wrapped has been performing on tour and at The Sydney Opera House with *Bell Shakespeare Company*.

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### **MATTHEW SUNDERLAND as RIDER**



Matthew has worked in the New Zealand film industry for over twenty years, first appearing as a chorus member in Stuart Main's and Peter Wells' 'Desperate Remedies'. He has since gone on to appear in over twenty short films, as well as numerous feature films. He is perhaps best known for playing the mass murderer David Gray in Robert Sarkie's film about the Aramoana massacre, 'Out Of The Blue', for which he received a Best Actor award at the New Zealand Film Awards. Since he completed work on 'Existence', Matthew has written and directed his first short film, 'Tuffy', and has recently wrapped on the feature film 'The Weight Of Elephants', directed by Daniel Borgman, and co-produced by Zentrop Pictures, Lars Von Trier's Production Company.

### **PETER MCCAULEY as ROBERT**



He has worked in television dramas such as Star Runner and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's The Lost World which he played Professor George Challenger. His character on The Lost World was a scientist with a thirst to prove the existence of dinosaurs on a plateau in the jungle. When the expedition is stranded he and other characters come upon various societies and creatures.

Also starring Thomasin McKenzie, Peter McKenzie, Aaron Jackson, Richard Freeman, Gentiane Lupi and Rachel Roberts.

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## EXISTENCE FESTIVAL SELECTION/PRESS AND REVIEWS

<http://www.facebook.com/existencemovie>

Preview Screening in Wellington as part of NZ International Film Festival 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug, 6<sup>th</sup> August Paramount Theatre, Wellington NZ



<http://www.nzff.co.nz/wellington/film/1c2d3ac6-7ed0-45c5-bbd8-18018ec384fa>

Critic/Review from Graeme Tuckett

[http://podcast.radionz.co.nz/ntn/ntn-20120717-1151-film\\_with\\_graeme\\_tuckett-048.mp3](http://podcast.radionz.co.nz/ntn/ntn-20120717-1151-film_with_graeme_tuckett-048.mp3)

Cinematica Podcast with Dan Slevin

[http://podcast.radionz.co.nz/ntn/ntn-20120717-1151-film\\_with\\_graeme\\_tuckett-048.mp3](http://podcast.radionz.co.nz/ntn/ntn-20120717-1151-film_with_graeme_tuckett-048.mp3)

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<http://www.capitaltimes.co.nz/Arthouse-movie-in-genre-clothing>

# Arthouse movie in genre clothing

1/08/2012 11:02:00 a.m.

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*Uma Thurman, Kristin Scott Thomas, Robert Pattinson & Christina Ricci in Bel Ami*

In a bleak and windswept environment, high in the hills surrounded by forbidding wind turbines, a ragged band of outcasts work tirelessly together to make something out of almost nothing. They are resourceful and determined - battling extreme conditions and overcoming impossible odds. I'm talking about the characters in new Wellington feature film **Existence** which gets its premiere in Wellington on Friday night, but I might as well be describing the filmmakers themselves who shot the film in the hills around Belmont and Makara in 2011. *Existence* is the first product of the NZ Film Commission's low budget Escalator programme and is a testament to the depth of talent in the industry here.

Set in a future where environmental disaster has doomed the remaining population to live off scraps - and where a fence guarded by mysterious "riders" promises a better future on the other side - *Existence* focuses on one woman (played by Loren Taylor from *Eagle vs. Shark*) and the sacrifice that she is prepared to make for a better life for her family. *Existence* is an arthouse movie in genre clothing. Writer-director Juliet Bergh has her cast underplaying when they could have chosen to chew scenery - and the film is the better for it. Matt Sunderland - as one of the riders - is particularly effective, the stillness of his performance allowing the audience to read so much into the crags and lines in his face.

Did you know that New Zealand imports more wood than we export? I didn't. That's just one of the interesting facts in **Song of the Kauri**, another title screening in the final week of the Film Festival. Northland luthier Laurie Williams makes beautiful instruments out of kauri - either dredged from swamps or cut sustainably from old growth forests - and Mathurin Molgat's documentary uses Williams' experience as a way in to a discussion of why we aren't making better use of one of New Zealand's most remarkable natural resources. The arguments for kauri are persuasive, but who is listening?

There was a time years ago when it seemed like every feature in the festival had a short playing before it, but those days are mostly over. The other way to see shorts on the big screen is via the animation and Māori and Pasifika programmes or - this year's innovation - **New Zealand's Best 2012**. Six films compete for three prizes and you can see all six at two special Paramount screenings (Wednesday and Thursday) and then vote for the audience favourite award. Look out for Michelle Savill's **Ellen Is Leaving** - a wistful rumination on change featuring a cast of young Wellington luminaries - and Sam Kelly's **Lambs** - a slice of Kiwi social realism with some profound moments.

Back at the multiplex, two of Hollywood's handsomest young stars are stretching out - one more successfully than the other. I'll admit that I have been somewhat scornful of the talents of Channing Tatum in these pages - I once described him as having "the potential to be a Steve McQueen for the generation whose underpants are falling out of the top of their trousers" - but with *21 Jump Street* and **Magic Mike** he looks to be finding a kind of stardom that he can call his own.

It's vital that movie stars appear to be effortlessly comfortable in their own skin and we get to see precisely how comfortable Tatum is as he spends a great deal wearing not much more. He plays the Magic Mike of the title, an ageing Florida male stripper looking to cash out. Alex Pettyfer - another young studlet I've been rude about in the past - is "The Kid", learning the ropes and going off the rails. *Magic Mike* is an extremely satisfying update of *All About Eve*: it feels authentic, the characters are easy to warm to and Steven Soderbergh's direction is customarily efficient and deceptively relaxed. A quick final note about Matthew McConaughey - nice bongos.

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# Wellington designer's knack for fossicking

SARAH CATHERALL

Last updated 05:00 01/08/2012

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Chris Skelton/Fairfax NZ

GIFTED: Wellington costume designer Kate Trafford with some of her recreations.

## Capital Life

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Ferreting in the landfill and through friends' sheds and op shop racks, Kate Trafford eventually found the materials she needed to create costumes for the haunting, futuristic New Zealand film, Existence.

By the end of her two-month search, the Wellington costume designer had sourced 160-year-old kimonos, old parachutes, lifejackets, military attire, horse saddlery and aged safety gear that she turned into outfits worn by characters in the post-apocalyptic movie.

Her Wellington home was turned upside down as she painted fabrics, ripped garments apart and sewed bits back together to create the outfits that will grace the screen at the film premiere during the New Zealand Film Festival this weekend.

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Existence is described by director Juliet Bergh as a "salvage punk western" set in a post apocalyptic future. It tells the story of Freya (Loren Taylor) who rebels from her family and the remnants of life as we know it. Set on the treeless hills overlooking Cook Strait, those left are bounded by a toxic sea and an electric fence powered by wind turbines patrolled by armed horsemen.

While 31-year-old Trafford initially thought she'd be creating Mad Max or Lady Gaga-inspired outfits, she eventually looked to Mongolian tribal communities for inspiration.

She says: "I thought about what I'd like to wear myself in that setting. I love wearing layers and I like wearing white. White makes you feel really good and gives you energy if you're tired."

The interior design graduate turned costume designer didn't have much to spend for the low-budget film, so she relied on the hunting skills she inherited from her grandmother, who used to own antique shops. For the horse paraphernalia, she visited a saddlery, finding pieces that the owner had collected and hoarded for 50 years.

Collecting bits and pieces for each actor, she says: "I was hunting and gathering, as though I was doing research for a book. Sourcing the physical objects was as relevant as researching contextually the world in which they would inhabit."

Freya's jacket comprised of a converted parachute and a dentist dust coat from the 1940s turned inside out, padded with raw wool. Freya's shift was made from 100-year-old Japanese cotton, while her boots were gumboots covered in tape, hemp and silicon shoe glue.

The riders who guard the electric fences in the film were dressed in dark, haunting outfits, and Trafford chopped and recycled military straps, buckles and chains for their costumes.

"It was incredibly creative. I loved the ability to work as an artist. To be successful in this industry, you have to always hunt and love op shops and be a person who loves stuff. I'm pretty tactile too. I love to feel and touch stuff."

She has worked in the costume departments for film and television and is currently working in the wardrobe department for The Hobbit. Past credits include dressing the stars of King Kong, Tin Tin and Avatar.

Trafford has also worked as a stylist, helping Wellington designer Lela Jacobs with her shoots, and also styling music videos for Fly My Pretties and the Black Seeds.

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"I've just been out to Trash Palace in Porirua because it's my day off today and I found this awesome hunting vest that goes down to my knees.

"It made me very happy."

## 'Existence' behind-the-scenes clips introduce us to The Rider and extreme filmmaking

Posted by **James Partridge**



The world premiere of **Juliet Bergh's** salvagepunk western **Existence** is fast approaching - **August 3rd**, during the Wellington leg of the **New Zealand International Film Festival**. I'm really looking forward to it. If you haven't seen the [teaser trailer](#) yet, I highly recommend you do.

Over the past couple of days, two behind-the-scenes clips/mini video blogs/electronic press kit files have turned up on the film's [Facebook page](#). The first clip introduces us to 'The Rider' played by **Matt Sutherland** (*Out of the Blue*), one of the men patrolling the boundary fence that keeps Earth's last survivors prisoner. The second one takes a light-hearted look at what it's like filming at New Zealand's windiest location (in the middle of winter, no less!), with an amusing toilet-centric anecdote thrown in for good measure from lead **Loren Taylor** (*Eagle vs Shark*) – who plays Freya in the film.

During his narration, Sutherland drops in an interesting little plot detail - something that wasn't apparent from the teaser trailer or synopsis. [So don't watch 'The Rider' clip if you want to avoid a possible spoiler.](#)

Clips are removed)

There are still tickets to the August 3rd world premiere available, so get in quick – visit(removed link) to book online.

### **You liking the look of 'Existence'? Going to the World Premiere?**

*Existence is the story of a woman, Freya, who is trapped in a dying world she cannot escape. Set many years from now, the earth is submerged under a toxic ocean and the last remaining land mass barely support the survivors. Freya's family salvages what little remains in a land where they live, effectively, as prisoners. An immense electric fence powered by wind turbines keeps the family shut off from the world beyond. Enigmatic Boundary Riders guard the fence and prevent crossings. Freya believes her only hope for freedom lies with a Boundary Rider who also yearns for something he cannot have. Determined to cross the fence she seduces the Rider and the consequences are disastrous for her family.*

Directed by Juliet Bergh, and co-written by Juliet Bergh and Jessica Charlton, the film stars Loren Taylor, Gareth Reeves, Matt Sutherland, Peter McCauley, Aaron Jackson, Thomasin McKenzie, Peter McKenzie, Rachel Roberts, Gentiane Lupi, and Rachel Freeman.

*Existence* will screen on **August 3** (World Premiere) and **August 6** as part of the Wellington leg of the New Zealand International Film Festival. *No news on a general release yet – but stay tuned*



Existence's Trailer screens at Wasteland Weekend 27 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2012

<http://wastelandweekend.com/wasteland-film-festival>

Quiet Earth Exclusive Trailer Preview:

<http://www.quietearth.us/articles/2012/07/EXCLUSIVE-Teaser-for-PA-salvagepunk-western-EXISTENCE>



quietearth [Celluloid 07.09.12]  post apocalyptic scifi drama western

Combining grassy expanses, wind turbines, and an electric fence, Juliet Bergh's low budget Kiwi drama not only looks stunning, but also uses two amazing talents: Loren Taylor (nee Horsley) from *Eagle vs Shark*, and Gareth Reeves from *A Song of Good*. I've seen extended footage, and while I'm not going to give much away besides the synopsis and teaser below, let's just say I'm very excited for this seemingly minimalistic film. Existence has it's world premier at the New Zealand Film Festival on Friday, August 3rd ([tickets](#)).

***'Existence' is the story of a woman, Freya, who is trapped in a dying world she cannot escape. Set many years from now, the earth is submerged under a toxic ocean and the last remaining land mass barely support the survivors. Freya's family salvages what little remains in a land where they live, effectively, as prisoners. An immense electric fence powered by wind turbines keeps the family shut off from the world beyond. Enigmatic Boundary Riders guard the fence and prevent crossings. Freya believes her only hope for freedom lies with a Boundary Rider who also yearns for something he cannot have. Determined to cross the Fence she seduces the Rider and the consequences are disastrous for her family***

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US/International Premiere; Citizen Jane Film Festival, Columbia Missouri, USA 20<sup>th</sup> October 2012



[http://www.citizenjanefilmfestival.org/showme\\_film.php?id=1057](http://www.citizenjanefilmfestival.org/showme_film.php?id=1057)

<http://www.voxmagazine.com/blog/2012/10/citizen-jane-film-review-existence/>

[CITIZEN JANE](#) > [CITIZEN JANE FESTIVAL 2012](#) > Citizen Jane film review: Existence

## Citizen Jane film review: Existence

BY [VOX STAFF](#) ON OCTOBER 20, 2012 11:07 PM · [NO COMMENTS](#)



*Review by Whitney Sommers*

*Existence*, directed by Juliet Bergh, tells the story of a woman, Freya, whose only agenda is just what the title suggests—to exist. With little food or resources Freya and her family are beginning to count their final days.

An electrically charged fence rules over what is left of a post-apocalyptic world in which they live, while the few people left struggle to survive. Armed men known as Boundary Riders patrol the miles of fencing and ensure no trespassers, while a toxic ocean prevents any form of an escape to the other side of the land.

Fleeing is virtually impossible. Freya is trapped. But she is certain that her purpose lies beyond the fence, and she is determined to get across no matter what it takes. In an act of desperation and a hope to escape her inevitable fate, she seduces a Rider she encounters while hunting. It seems to be the perfect plan, but the consequences are unexpected.

The drama presents a mood much like that of *The Hunger Games*. Lack of smiling faces combined with dull colors and clouded scenes add to its dreariness. Like the characters in Gary Ross's film, Freya and her family are controlled by a force they cannot compete with while they try to find meaning and purpose in their lives.

Filmed in the overcast, mountainous beauty of New Zealand, *Existence* offers a scenic view for its audience amid a rather depressing and somewhat violent story. Like Freya and her family, the film had limited resources and relied heavily on its surroundings to make up for what it lacked in money.

Overall the film presents a story that will leave audience members both sympathetic while also evoking thought about hierarchies of power, the meaning of life, and what it means to exist.

**Vox rating:** VVVV

**THE RATING SYSTEM** VVVVV = AWESOME! SEE IT TWICE VVVV = DEFINITELY GO SEE IT VVV = HMM... IT'S OKAY VV = EH... DVD MAYBE? V = DON'T BOTHER

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## EXISTENCE 2011

Mhairead Connor – Producer, Existence

### Tell us a little about your film

Existence is a post-apocalyptic tale about a woman who lives inside a boundary fence and longs to find out what is on the other side. She sets into action a chain of events that changes her world forever.

Existence was part of the New Zealand Film Commission's Escalator scheme – super low budget features that aimed at allowing early career feature filmmakers make distinctive films with appropriate methodologies. Melissa Dodds and I produced the film, it was directed by Juliet Bergh and written by Juliet and Jess Charlton.

### Tell us a little about yourself

I'm a local film and television producer, my company is Little Wolf Ltd. I was born in Wellington and have worked here most of my career as a producer. I have a background in television; arts series and documentaries mainly. Prior to establishing Little Wolf I worked with Wellington company Sticky Pictures for many years. I've also made commercials, web-series, short films and multi-media installation work all here in Wellington.

### Why did you decide to film in Wellington?

One of the distinctive features about the film are the landscapes the characters occupy. They are BIG, moody and full of cinematic value for the resources we had. Setting the film in effectively another world, we needed landscapes that would feel believably different from everyday existence to a local and international audience. We also didn't have the ability to travel and accommodate a cast and crew away from our local base so 95% all of the locations in the film are within 25km of central Wellington. You would never guess it to look at them though. It is one of the things I love so much about home.

Our film also has a very distinctive design aesthetic, we were creating props, locations and costumes from scratch or at the very least adapting them significantly from existing material. The design talent in Wellington is pretty phenomenal. In terms of film, it is demonstrably amongst the best in the world. We had some remarkably talented designers on our film – working very, very smartly to create what we needed for the budget that we had. The local industry is generous and passionate, Existence was an incredibly ambitious project and I really don't believe we could have made this film anywhere else in the world except here.

### **What locations did you use?**

With the very kind support of Meridian Energy we were able to film out at West Wind Farm at Makara under the wind turbines – very, very atmospheric! Our other principal location was Belmont Regional Park in the World War 2 armament bunkers. We also did some filming on the Kapiti coast.

### **What was your favorite of the locations you used?**

They were all spectacular but for me it was probably the Wind Farm. Right out on the coast, intense weather, incredible light and the turbines themselves...



### **How did you find the local crew?**

Amazing!! Obviously, myself and Melissa had long-term working relationships with our crew. They loved the story and we knew they would go the extra distance for the film because that's what they do. They were creative, adaptable and stoic in some challenging environments.

## **What aspects with the film did you work with Film Wellington on in pre-production, production, (post production)?**

Our relationship with Film Wellington started right from pre, pre-production. Because the film was so location dependent it was crucial to have their support from the early days. They understood the film and the challenges we had. They checked out locations for us. They navigated us through a lot of relationships with various councils and government departments that would have taken us weeks to develop without them. They came through with excellent suggestions for alternatives and last minute location changes (of which there were a few) where never a problem. At the time of writing this interview we are in post-production and Film Wellington are still assisting us - with advice and introductions. They're very much part of the crew really.

## **What was the most challenging aspect of your shoot and how did you overcome it?**

We were often filming right out on Wellington's coastline in extreme weather and that was very challenging. It was somewhat intentional – we needed the weather to sell the “otherness” of the world but it meant having to have a very adaptable schedule and a very resilient crew. We tried to incorporate this into our planning as much as possible and warned our crew and our locations we would be changing things at the last minute. We managed throughout the process by communicating as much as we could as soon as we could. Wellington's compactness definitely helped this. We would have lost huge parts of our shooting day if the locations had been too far away from each other – our cast and crew stepped up to the plate and became incredibly good at adapting. In fact they became so good Melissa and I decided that if we did go through an apocalyptic event we'd probably be ok if our crew was around.

## **Is there anything about filming in Wellington that is different/distinctive?**

Wellington is very compact, by international standards it's a very small city but it has a remarkable variety of locations within stone's throw of the centre of town and the depth of creative and technical talent is well documented. It makes challenging projects like Existence possible in a way they wouldn't be possible elsewhere. On a comfort level, Wellington is town full of great food, great culture and great accommodation (our film received support from the Museum Hotel) this makes a big difference to cast and to crew – when they're not working hard they can really enjoy themselves.

## ‘Existence’ shatters creative boundaries, provokes thought



Image used under fair use doctrine

There is something haunting, twisted and yet achingly beautiful about “Existence.” The film, shot on the coast of New Zealand, is not only visually gorgeous, but physically chilling. For the first time in a long time, I had to calm my racing heartbeat after stepping out of the auditorium. The film, written and directed by [Juliet Bergh](#), dips into the relatively modern genre of “salvagepunk,” a theme that explores post-apocalyptic worlds and dystopian societies. In “Existence,” young mother Freya lives with her two children, husband and father-in-law on a windy, ruined coastline. Opposite the ocean is an ominous, ever-running wind farm, accompanied by an electrically-charged fence called the Boundary Fence. The Fence is guarded by cowboy-esque law enforcers, titled The Riders, whose sole duty is to make sure none of Freya’s people get through the gate. Freya, desperate for freedom, enters into a physical relationship with one of these Riders, hoping he will allow her access to the “other side.”

The concept itself is enough to cause ample intrigue, and yet played out in film, it is a hundred times better. The cinematography is brilliant, relying mainly on facial expressions, movements, and music to tell the story, rather than dialogue. The plot follows no strict rule, instead hitching the audience onto a roller coaster of ups and downs. While there are some slow parts to “Existence”, there is nothing genuinely “boring.” When all else failed, I was captivated simply by the scenery. With such a low budget, the film creators did an astonishing job of incorporating the beautiful New Zealand ocean and fields into a movie that’s supposed to be set years and years in the future.

And Freya. Oh, Freya. It’s been years since I’ve seen such a strong, conflicted, terrifyingly lovely woman on the silver screen. She said so little, and yet her face and motions conveyed so much.

I won’t spoil too much, but “Existence” is truly a mind-blower. It’s almost as crazy as “[Inception](#),” as Freya travels to the other side and leaves the entire audience with their jaws hanging and their eyes scanning the screen for more. The theme of the film is obscure and open, and yet any viewer will agree that it’s powerfully captivating. “Existence” may not be the typical box-office smasher, but it’s an incredible film with creativity echoing through every scene.

**By Lauren Puckett** Share this: [Facebook](#)<sup>47</sup> [Twitter](#)<sup>4</sup> [Reddit](#) [About Lauren Puckett](#)

*My name is Lauren Puckett, and I’m one of the A&E section editors for The Rock. I’m a senior, and a member of City Lights show choir and the Varsity Acting Squad. Besides singing, acting, and participating in my church’s activities, I like to write every story I can get my hands on. Writing is what I love, and it’s what I want to do with my life. Other than that, I’m a ridiculous blonde who likes Arnold Palmer and raspberry yogurt pretzels. I’m a Ravenclaw and I’d probably hail from District 8 or 11, although I doubt I’d survive the Hunger Games. Feel free to shoot me an email or come say hello—you’ll probably find me in the choir hallway or the journalism room. You know us “artsy kids”—we don’t ever leave our roost.*

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## -Existence Begins in 2012-

(PRESS RELEASE Wellington, New Zealand – October 25, 2012)

Post-apocalyptic drama **Existence** is starting its OE with festival screenings in North America and Vietnam, and a deal with digital entertainment curator, FilmBuff.

The screenings cap off an exciting few weeks for the team behind the film with **Existence** taking out the coveted 'Best Feature Film Script' at the SWANZ (Scriptwriters AWARDS New Zealand) and the film's writer/director Juliet Bergh and writer/DOP Jessica Charlton being awarded 'Best New Writers' at the same event.

The film, the first finished piece from the New Zealand Film Commission's low budget escalator scheme, had its first screenings at the New Zealand International Film Festival earlier in the year. **Existence** had its US Premiere screening internationally on Oct 20<sup>th</sup> at the **Citizen Jane Film Festival** in Columbia, Missouri. <http://www.citizenjanefilmfestival.org>

Next month, Existence will screen in competition at **HANIFF, The Hanoi International Film Festival** in Vietnam. The festival runs between 25 – 29<sup>th</sup> Nov. Director Juliet Bergh has been invited to attend the festival which has a focus on connecting filmmaking in the Asia-Pacific region.

**Existence** is the story of a woman, Freya, who is trapped in a dying world she cannot escape.

*"It is an imagined vision of the future drawing on the threat of global warming and fear of environmental catastrophe. It explores how the world would be if we allowed our current rate of consumption to go unchecked"* says Director Juliet Bergh.

After its festival screenings, FilmBuff will release the film across international broadband video-on-demand platforms.

*"Online distribution is THE new model for independent filmmakers, allowing smaller film s to reach audiences all over the world and build a ground swell"* say Existence producers Mhairead Connor and Melissa Dodds. *"FilmBuff is amongst the best in the world at using this model and we are thrilled that Existence, which is finding fans from mid-west America to south-east Asia, will be able to connect to global online platforms such as iTunes, Amazon Instant, Netflix, Hulu, and many more"*.

*"In the digital age - with a partner like FilmBuff, distance doesn't have to be such a tyrant. For filmmakers trying to get audiences from beyond New Zealand it's a very exciting time"* say the producers.

**Existence** will continue its festival run for the next six months in addition to local screenings. Further information can be found on the film's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/existencemovie](http://www.facebook.com/existencemovie)) and the website ([www.existence.co.nz](http://www.existence.co.nz)).

## **Ends**

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### **About FilmBuff**

Founded in 2007, FilmBuff is a pioneer of digital distribution and offers the value of both innovation and experience to filmmakers. FilmBuff draws upon its deep relationships with both filmmakers and festivals to curate content for audiences that consistently informs, entertains and inspires audiences. As one of the largest and most successful suppliers of digital entertainment content, FilmBuff delivers to all of the leading on-demand platforms worldwide through its partnerships with cable, satellite and Telco companies, game consoles, online retailers, wireless platforms and hardware manufacturers. For more information, visit FilmBuff at [www.FilmBuff.com](http://www.FilmBuff.com).

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Freya played by LOREN TAYLOR (nee Horsely Eagle vs Shark) on set at Makara West Wind Farm  
photograph taken by Nick Swinglehurst © Existence Limited

## Congratulations to Escalator film *Existence* as it packs its bags to compete in Hanoi.

*Existence* is continuing its successful path, following its premiere at the New Zealand International Film Festival and US premiere screening at the Citizen Jane Film Festival in Colombia, Missouri.

The film, produced by Mhairead Connor and Melissa Dodds, written and directed by Juliet Bergh and co-written by DOP Jessica Charlton, will screen in competition at the Hanoi International Film Festival (HANIFF), late in November. Juliet Bergh has been invited to attend the event, which focuses on connecting Asia-Pacific filmmakers.

The film was also selected for a Breakthru Screening at the Melbourne International Film Festival.

*Existence* was supported through the New Zealand Film Commission's low-budget Escalator scheme.

"It's fantastic seeing *Existence* doing so well" says NZFC Chief Executive Graeme Mason. "It's the first finished piece from the Escalator scheme and the team has done a remarkable job within the constraints of a small budget, to make a film being celebrated with awards and international screenings."

*Existence* won Best Feature Film Script and Juliet Bergh and Jessica Charlton were awarded Best New Writers at the recent Scriptwriters Awards New Zealand.

*Existence* is the story of a woman, Freya, who is trapped in a dying world she cannot escape.

After its festival screenings, FilmBuff will release the film across international broadband video-on-demand platforms.



# EXISTENCE



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