

FORTISSIMOFILMS

Red Carpet Productions

Present
A FILM BY

CATE SHORTLAND

PRODUCED BY

ANTHONY ANDERSON

Somersault

OFFICIAL SELECTION
TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
CONTEMPORARY WORLD CINEMA

SCREENINGS

Wed	15/9	11:45 am	Varsity 5	Press / Industry Screening
Fri	17/9	7:15 pm	Isabel Bader Theatre	1 st Screening
Sat	18/9	4:30 pm	Cumberland 2	2 nd Screening

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SYNOPSIS

A visually haunting film, set at the foot of the Australian ski fields, SOMERSAULT is the story of a young girl's sensory journey, through which she learns the true meaning of love, family and friendship

Living with her young single mother, sixteen-year old Heidi (Abbie Cornish), starved of true affection, looks to short-lived sexual encounters for the physical and emotional contact she craves. A confrontation with her mother is the catalyst for Heidi leaving home and fleeing to the snow resort town of Lake Jindabyne.

Once there, she contacts a previous fling but is left to fend for herself with little money and no job. In between searching for work, Heidi explores the countryside, finding solace in the startling natural beauty around her.

A chance encounter with Joe (Sam Worthington), the son of a wealthy local farmer leads to a complex relationship. Resistant at first, Joe finds himself drawn to Heidi. However, his own internal struggles prevent him from plunging headlong into the relationship, choosing instead to withdraw without explanation. Joe's relationship with Heidi challenges his ideas of sexuality, class and his future in Jindabyne.

Confused and hurt by the rejection, Heidi resorts to seeking out intimacy in the seedy nightclubs of the tourist town. She damages her newfound relationships as her world unravels around her.

In the harsh light of morning, Heidi must respond to the hurt she has caused others. Through the transforming power of forgiveness, and the kindness of a local motel owner Irene (Lynette Curran), Heidi learns that she has more to offer than she had realised.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Title	SOMERSAULT
Duration	106 min
Production Date	2004
Delivery Format	35 mm
Production Company	Red Carpet Productions PTY Ltd.

CAST

Heidi	ABBIE CORNISH
Joe	SAM WORTHINGTON
Irene	LYNETTE CURRAN
Richard	ERIK THOMSON
Stuart	NATHANIEL DEAN
Bianca	HOLLIE ANDREW
Diane	LEAH PURCELL
Nicole	OLIVIA PIGEOT
Adam	DAMIAN de MONTEMAS
Pat	JOHN SHEERIN
Martha	ANNE LOUISE LAMBERT
Roy	PAUL GLEESON
Karl	BLAKE PITTMAN
Guy	JUSTIN MARTIN
Sean	BEN TATE
Josh	JOSHUA PHILLIPS
John	TOBY SCHMITZ
Nick	HENRY NIXON
Sally	DIANA GLENN
Rachel	ERICA ENGLERT
Clare	STEPHANIE OVERS
Brian the Barman	ALEX BABIC
Bus Ticket Vendor	ELIZABETH MUNTAR
Waitress Chinese Restaurant	CAROLINE LOWE

CREW

Writer/Director	Cate Shortland
Producer	Anthony Anderson
Executive Producer	Jan Chapman
DOP/Camera Operator	Robert Humphreys, A.C.S.
2 nd Unit DOP/Camera Operator	Carolyn Constantine
Sound Designer	Sam Petty
Production Designer	Melinda Doring
Art Director	Janie Parker
Costume Designer	Emily Seresin
Make-up/Hair Supervisor	Angela Conte
Production Manager	Libby Sharpe
Production Co-ordinator	Sophie Dick
Producer's Assistant	Leigh Brezler
Director's Attachment	Heng Tang
1st Assistant Director	John Martin
2nd Assistant Director	Eddie Raymond
3rd Assistant Director	Kate North Ash
Script Supervisor	Paul Kiely
Location Manager	Annelies Norland
Sound Recordist	Mark Blackwell
SFX Supervisor	Peter Stubbs
Post Production Supervisor	Naomi Wenck
Editor	Scott Gray
1st Assistant Editor	Rodrigo Balart
Music Supervisor	Norman Parkhill
Composer Band	Decoder Ring
Dialogue Editor	Yulia Akerholt
FX/Atmos Editor	Mark Franken
Casting Agent	Nikki Barrett
	Alison Barrett Casting
Dialogue Coach	Victoria Mielewska
Choreographer	Kate Champion
Unit Publicist	Fiona Nix
Stills Photographers	Matt Nettheim
	Elise Lockwood

THE PRODUCTION

SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT

The script for the film that was to become *Somersault* began seven years before filming. The writer/director Cate Shortland was travelling regularly between Sydney and Canberra and, inspired by the haunting beauty of Lake George, decided that she wanted to make a film around a lake. At the time Cate was also working with emotionally disturbed children. There was one particular girl of whom she was fond and was to be the inspiration of the main character, Heidi.

Shortland: "It was a combination of landscape and disturbed children that was the inspiration. That's still there in the film."

Shortland approached Anthony Anderson in 1996 to produce the ideas that she was working on and they struck a deal. Anderson: "Cate said let's not shoot this film until both of us are happy with every scene in it. That was a fantastic invitation to me."

Shortland: "We have known each other for 10 years and creatively we challenge each other. He wants things to be more emotional and I want them to be more restrained. We can be like oil and water. We often have different opinions but that usually helps the work."

The script was developed over various rounds of funding whilst Shortland and Anderson made the short films *Pentuphouse* and *Flowergirl* in '98 and '99 respectively. The shorts were successful internationally, which made seeking funding for a feature that much easier for the team.

Shortland: "Anthony kept getting us funding so I could write another draft and I became addicted to the writing. Once you get into it and start thinking like the characters, you can start to create a world. But starting to think like the characters is really hard. You have to cut yourself off from everything around you and be those people in a way."

Shortland and Anderson applied for the Aurora script development scheme, which is funded by the New South Wales Film & Television Office. Under the scheme, over a six-month period mentors provide feedback at the beginning and again at the end, after a workshop with actors. Cate and Anthony were successful and joined the inaugural scheme where they were mentored by renowned filmmakers including Alison Tilson (*Japanese Story*), Rob Festinger (*In the Bedroom*), Jane Campion (*The Piano*), and Chris Noonan (*Babe*). As a result the script took a great leap forward.

Shortland: "The script probably changed the most through Aurora. Heidi used to be quite passive and it was suggested that I make her more active in her own destruction. We made Heidi go out and seek what was to destroy her. Aurora was quite phenomenal with how much it shifted everything."

Jan Chapman was also a mentor on the inaugural Aurora scheme. She was familiar with Shortland and Anderson's short films, and already felt that Shortland had "an extraordinarily strong visual confidence."

Chapman: "I thought their script for *Somersault* was incredibly insightful about a young girl testing the boundaries of who she was, in terms of sex and love and friendship. I thought it was particularly truthful. We've seen coming-of-age films before, but really this time I thought we were in the mind of an adolescent girl. It was a different approach. It was much more intimate in a very picturesque setting in the mountains of NSW."

When they were encouraged to add an experienced EP to their team, Chapman was more than willing to take the role: "I thought that if adding my name would help I was certainly prepared to do so but this is only worth doing if you can have a relationship with the producer and the director and my sense was correct: they were very inclusive. It felt very much like a trio a lot of the time."

THE STORY

Anderson: "*Somersault* is about forgiveness; Heidi has to get to a point of self-forgiveness before she can move on. Underlying her behaviour is a level of guilt as well as fear and the need to survive. The falling out that she's had with her mother, she sees as irredeemable and it's only through her relationship with Irene, and learning that Irene can still love her own son who has done something much more heinous than Heidi, that she realises that no matter what you've done your mother will still want to see you. For her, that's her path to redemption and self-forgiveness. It's also a story about the experiences that we have with love that may not be about an ongoing relationship. They are often about understanding a bit more about another person and certainly understanding a bit more about ourselves. For Heidi and Joe, that interaction and the time they spend together is important for both of them in that sense."

The key to *Somersault* is the connections people make in life and how they are changed by them. Shortland: "This film is inhabited by scared people, who all want to be loved; I wanted the viewer to be intimate with them."

Casting & Character

HEIDI - Abbie Cornish

The casting of the main role of Heidi was surprisingly straightforward, as the first person to audition was Abbie Cornish.

Shortland: "She thoroughly embodies the essence of Heidi, especially the fragility and toughness of her. She allows the audience to experience her beauty and pain. Abbie really nailed the character as soon as she walked in the door. During rehearsal it was about getting the confidence. Heidi is such an interior character, so Abbie had to really feel who Heidi was.

The character of Heidi is a character outside of the normal realm of what you'd expect a 16-year-old girl to be. For this reason, Abbie Cornish found that Heidi was potentially a difficult character to play.

Cornish: "I think every character needs to be explored, but her even more so because you can't just put her on the outside, you can't just try and act her from face value. So much of Heidi comes from deep inside, so you've got to find her from right deep inside your gut and then you act from that place."

JOE - Sam Worthington

Casting Joe was much harder. On paper, the role of Joe seemed less complicated than Heidi. Anderson: "In the end the chemistry between Sam Worthington and Abbie Cornish was what sealed it for us. But we were also very cautious because we had not seen Sam give on screen the complexity and the depth of emotion he does in this film. It was a real punt and Cate had a strong instinct that Sam would be right for Joe. As it turned out, Sam has given us a Joe that is much more complex and is much more interesting than what was on the page."

IRENE - Lynette Curran

A key role in the film is that of Irene, the owner of the local motel in Jindabyne, who cautiously provides accommodation to Heidi when she leaves home. The highly regarded Lynette Curran plays Irene.

When Curran read the script she saw intensity in it. "I think it's beautiful because I've never seen anything like it. When I read it I saw this whole thing about boundaries: Heidi is so vulnerable. She really doesn't have boundaries, she has such a love of life and it's so genuine and so individual, I just find her a really remarkable character. Heidi's problem with her mother, where she wonders if she'll ever be forgiven is a parallel with Irene's relationship with her son - can Irene ever forgive her son when she's still grieving for her husband."

CAST RESUMES

Abbie Cornish – Heidi

Abbie Cornish's first feature film role was in Samantha Lang's *Monkey's Mask*, which she followed with roles in *Horseplay* and most recently *One Perfect Day*.

She won an Australian Film Institute Award in 1999 for her role in ABC Television's *Wildside*. Abbie has also appeared with Hugo Weaving in the short film *Everything Goes*.

Somersault is Abbie's first lead role in a feature film.

Sam Worthington – Joe

Sam Worthington is one of Australia's most exciting young actors.

A graduate from Australia's National Drama Institute in 1998 (NIDA), Sam made his feature film debut in the acclaimed Australian film *Bootmen* (1999), a performance which earned him an Australian Film Institute award nomination.

Sam has worked with some of Australia's most successful actors and directors including Bryan Brown, Toni Collette and Sam Neill in the David Caesar directed black comedy *Dirty Deeds* (2001), with David Wenham and Timothy Spall in the AFI award winning box office hit *Gettin' Square* (2002).

Other film credits include the American feature *Hart's War* (2000) with Bruce Willis and the Australian feature *New Skin* (2000). His stage credits include Belvoir's Company B critically praised tour of *The Judas Kiss* (1999).

Sam's upcoming film projects include *Thunderstruck* which is due for release mid 2004 as well the epic U.S. production *The Great Raid* which was filmed in Australia and also stars Benjamin Bratt and Joseph Fiennes.

Lynette Curran – Irene

Lynette Curran is an experienced theatre, film and television actress with over 100 credits to her name.

Her theatre credits include *The Real Thing*, *The Seagull*, *Vagina Monologues* and *All My Sons*.

During her impressive film career Lynette has worked with directors such as Gillian Armstrong in *Oscar and Lucinda*, Rowan Woods in *The Boys*, John Curran in *Praise* and Sue Brooks in the highly acclaimed *Japanese Story*.

Lynette won the Beyond Film Best Performance by a Lead Actress award for her work in *The Boys*.

CREW RESUMES

Cate Shortland – Writer / Director

Cate has a Graduate Diploma in directing from the Australian Film Television and Radio School (2000) where she received the Southern Star Award for most promising student.

She has written and directed 4 award winning short films: *Strap on Olympia* (1995), *Pentuphouse* (1998), *Flowergirl* (1999) and *Joy* (2000) - all of them in collaboration with producer Anthony Anderson. The films have been received with acclaim at festivals around the world including Oberhausen, Tampere, Clermont-Ferrand, Berlin and London.

Between 2001 and 2003 Cate directed episodes of *The Secret Life of Us* for Southern Star/Channel 4.

Somersault (2004) is Cate's feature film debut. She has been developing the screenplay with Red Carpet Productions since 1996.

Anthony Anderson – Producer

Anthony Anderson established a career as a film lawyer in private practice and subsequently worked in-house in business affairs at Columbia Tri-Star and Shanahan Management.

Anthony founded Red Carpet Productions in 1996 to develop independent Australian films. He produced the short dramas *Pentuphouse* (1998) and *Flowergirl* (1999) with Cate Shortland, and executive produced *Joy* (2000). He was also associate producer on *Strap On Olympia* (1995) and *The Visitor* (2001). Red Carpet Productions has several feature film projects at various stages of development. *Somersault* (2004) is it's first feature film.

Jan Chapman – Executive Producer

Multi award winning producer Jan Chapman began her film career as a director of short films. She then honed both her producer and director skills at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, where she worked from 1982 to 1989. While at the ABC, Jan met and worked with Jane Campion on *Two Friends*, the first of a long list of successful collaborations between the two. In 1989 Jan set up her own production company, Jan Chapman Films, and produced her first feature film *The Last Days of Chez Nous*, directed by Gillian Armstrong.

In 1992, Jan reunited with director Jane Campion on the internationally acclaimed film *The Piano*, which was co-recipient of the Palme d'Or prize at the 1993 Cannes Film Festival as well as winner of scores of other international awards. That year Jan also won the Producers Guild of America's Nova Award for the most promising theatrical motion picture producer.

Jan then went on to produce several films in the 1990s including *Love Serenade* (1996), which won the Camera d'Or prize at the Cannes Film Festival that year. *Holy Smoke* (1999) followed and premiered internationally at the Venice Film Festival.

Jan's latest feature film is the striking *Lantana* (2001), directed by Ray Lawrence. Another successful Jan Chapman Films production, *Lantana* garnered an unprecedented seven Australian Film Institute awards as well as a British Independent Film award and the Prix de la Jury and Prix de la Critique prizes at the 2002 Cognac Film Festival.

Somersault (2004) marks Jan's first role as Executive Producer.

Melinda Doring – Production Designer

Melinda Doring is a design graduate of the Australian Film, Television and Radio school. She has collaborated with Cate Shortland as production designer on the short films *Pentuphouse* and *Flowergirl*. Melinda served as costume designer on the Australian feature films *Walking on Water* (2001) and *Mullet* (2000) and the television mini-series *Marking Time* (2003).

Somersault (2004) is Melinda's first feature film as production designer.

Robert Humphreys – Director of Photography

Robert Humphreys has shot over 40 films for television and cinema release. He has photographed many influential short films including the multi-award winning *Flowergirl* and *Joy* for Cate Shortland, *Confessions of a Headhunter* for Sally Riley, *Unit 52* for Tony Krawitz and *Delivery Day* for Jane Manning. He shot his first feature film *Mullet* in 2000, which was nominated for 5 Australian Film Institute awards, and he was awarded a Gold Award for cinematography at the 2001 ACS (New South Wales + Australian Capital Territory) Awards for Cinematography.

In 2001 Robert shot the feature film *Walking on Water*, starring Vince Collosimo, which won the Teddy Award and The Readers Prize of the Siegfessale at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2002.

Decoder Ring – Composer

Decoder Ring is a band from Sydney Australia. Described as genre defying, Decoder Ring's emotive experimentalism offers the perfect mixture of electronica, rock, arthouse, ambience, dancefloor and cinematic orchestration. Their hugely impressive debut offerings "Spooky Action at a Distance" and "Decoder Ring" (Hello Cleveland!/EMI) turned musical conventions on their head, and were instantly amongst 2002/2003's best releases

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