

UNDERTOW



PRESS KIT

UNDERTOW

PRODUCTION COMPANY

EMERALD
PRODUCTIONS

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UNDERTOW

PRODUCTION DETAILS

Director: Miranda Nation

Writer: Miranda Nation

Producer: Lyn Norfor

Executive Producers: Liz Watts, Prue Williams, Sheila Jayadev, John Molloy, Mitu Bhowrick

Cinematographer: Bonnie Elliott ACS

Production Designer: Penelope Southgate

Editors: Julie-Anne De Ruvo, Nick Meyers ASE

Costume Designer: Stacey O'Connor

Original Music: Lisa Gerrard, James Orr, Raul Sanchez i Jorge

Casting Director: Marianne Jade, Maura Fay Casting

Line Producer: Antje Kulpe

Key Cast: Laura Gordon, Olivia DeJonge, Rob Collins, Josh Helman

Distributor: Mind Blowing World

Financiers: Film Victoria, Melbourne International Film Festival Premiere Fund,
Screen Australia, Definition Films, Undertow Trust

Duration: 95 mins

Language: English

Format: DCP 2K

Sound: 5.1 Surround

Aspect Ratio: Cinemascope 2:39:1

UNDERTOW

CAST

CLAIRE LAURA GORDON

ANGIE OLIVIA DEJONGE

DAN ROB COLLINS

BRETT JOSH HELMAN

DARREN MARTIN BLUM

LISA DARCI MCDONALD

JARVID SLAVKO ZWIRN

FEMALE DOCTOR FANNY HANUSIN

TREV DAMIEN HILL



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Determined not to give into grief after losing her baby, Claire develops a dangerous obsession with a pregnant young woman.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Struggling to accept the loss of her baby, Claire becomes suspicious of her husband's relationship with a feisty young woman, Angie. When she discovers Angie is pregnant, Claire develops an increasingly irrational obsession with her that puts both their lives in danger. Only when confronted by the explosive secret behind Angie's pregnancy does Claire begin to reclaim her sanity.

UNDERTOW, a bold and sensual psychological thriller, explores the dangerous underbelly of the female psyche. It is a career-launching debut feature film for award-winning writer/director Miranda Nation, aimed at a sophisticated adult audience, female-skewed who enjoy powerful psychological thrillers such as WISH YOU WERE HERE, BLACK SWAN and THE HUNT.

LONG SYNOPSIS

On a wet, winter night, Claire, pregnant and at home in the bath, starts bleeding while her husband, Dan, is out at his mate Brett's party. Meanwhile, at the debauched party, a young woman, Angie, is partying hard. Unable to get hold of Dan, Claire drives herself to hospital but they cannot save the baby. Dan arrives at the hospital too late.

Several months later, Claire is struggling to come to terms with her loss. She has buried herself in her work as a photojournalist but is troubled by haunting visions. When, by chance, Claire sees Dan checking into a motel with Angie, she fears the worst. Approaching Angie under the guise of journalism, Claire discovers that not only is Angie sixteen years old but that she is pregnant - a blow that sends Claire reeling as she assumes the baby is Dan's. Claire confronts Dan and finds out that Angie is actually embroiled with his best mate, Brett, who Angie claims is the father of her baby.

Discovering it is unlikely she will ever have a child, Claire takes on the role of Angie's carer. But Claire's hold on reality is deteriorating and she is increasingly troubled by visions. As Claire's paranoia heightens, her behaviour towards Angie becomes obsessive and controlling. When Angie rejects her, Claire reacts violently, trying to strangle Angie as she fights to get back the ultrasound picture of Angie's baby.

At Dan's community fundraiser event, where Brett is the celebrity footballer, Claire drinks heavily and tries to talk to Dan. But Angie stages a Femen-style protest outside and Dan has to deal with the PR disaster. Under pressure, he decides to take Angie home. Betrayed, Claire leaves with Brett to take drugs and have sex on the beach. As dawn breaks, Claire believes she sees Angie and follows her into the ocean. Claire almost drowns and Brett, trying to save her, is swept away.

After a tense 24 hours, Brett's body is found but Claire can only think about Angie and the baby. Claire finds Angie at the beach and Angie reveals her secret - at that party on the night Claire lost her baby, she was forced into group sex by Brett's mates. Claire realises Angie is bleeding and rushes her to hospital but Angie loses the baby.

Claire watches a video of Brett's birthday, showing the shocking treatment of Angie in her intoxicated state. She confronts Dan about what he knew and Dan confesses he didn't want to know. Claire is devastated.

A month later, Claire is at the hospital again and we see on the ultrasound that this time Claire is pregnant. She is happy but hesitant - who is the father, Dan or Brett? On her way home, she sees Angie in her school uniform at the bus stop recovering from her trauma and beginning to resume her life again.

UNDERTOW

KEY CREATIVES

MIRANDA NATION – WRITER/DIRECTOR

Miranda is an award-winning writer-director, represented by HLA Management. She has combined her passions for story-telling and social justice on diverse projects; from devising theatre with trafficked women, to running film workshops in a refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border.

Originally training as an actor, Miranda made her first short film in Paris, while studying at the prestigious Jacques Lecoq École Internationale de Théâtre. On return to Australia, she shifted focus to writing/directing, especially driven to create strong complex roles for women. In 2010 she completed a Graduate Diploma – Directing at AFTRS.

Miranda's short film, *ELI THE INVINCIBLE* (2011), made entirely with young non-actors, premiered at the Edinburgh International Film Festival, won the SBS Programming award at Flickerfest, and was selected for the Melbourne International Film Festival where Miranda participated in the Accelerator program for emerging Australian directors.

Miranda's short film *PERCEPTION* (2013) was produced through Screen Australia's highly competitive Springboard Program. *PERCEPTION* won the Dendy Award for Best Short Film at the Sydney Film Festival, was nominated for an AACTA Award and had its international premiere at Clermont-Ferrand.

Miranda is developing several feature and long-form projects. Her feature screenplay *ZERO CIRCLE* was a semi-finalist in the esteemed Academy Nicholl Fellowships in Screenwriting. In 2015, Miranda received a Director's Acclaim grant from Screen Australia to work as Director's Attachment with acclaimed writer/director Cate Shortland on her feature *Berlin Syndrome*.

LYN NORFOR – PRODUCER

Lyn is one of the three founding partners of Emerald Productions and has just completed the debut feature film, *UNDERTOW* (writer/director Miranda Nation) with funding from Screen Australia, Film Victoria and the MIFF Premiere Fund. Emerald has also recently completed two feature films – *ALI'S WEDDING* (writers: Andrew Knight and Osamah Sami, director; Jeffrey Walker) in association with Matchbox Pictures that premiered at the Sydney Film Festival, 2017 and won awards at Melbourne and Sydney Film Festivals as well as CinefestOz and an Australian Writer's Guild Award for Best Adaptation; and *HOT MESS* (writer/director; Lucy Coleman), selected for screening at the Seattle International Film Festival.

Lyn's credits as a producer encompass drama and documentary and her films, including *ON THE LOOSE* (w/d: Jane Oehr), have won numerous awards and screened at the Sydney Film Festival and the Sundance Film Festival. Lyn has produced over a dozen short films that have screened in many domestic and international festivals and garnered numerous accolades. The latest short film *SPICE SISTERS* (writer/director Sheila Jayadev) won Best Script at the Sydney Film Festival 2016.

Lyn was selected for Screen Australia's Springboard program (2011-12) for debut features with writer/director Miranda Nation for their psychological thriller *UNDERTOW*. Lyn and Miranda's Springboard-funded short film, *PERCEPTION*, won Best Short Film in the Dendy Awards, Sydney Film Festival 2013, was nominated for Best Short Film in the AACTA Awards 2014 and selected for screening in the prestigious Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival 2014.

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BONNIE ELLIOTT – DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ACS

Bonnie is an award-winning cinematographer who works across drama, documentary and video art. Her work has screened at major International film festivals, including Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Toronto and Tribeca. Bonnie shot her debut feature film in Iran. *MY TEHRAN FOR SALE*, directed by Granaz Moussavi, premiered at the 2009 Adelaide Film Festival, and screened at international film festivals including Toronto, Pusan and Rotterdam.

Other feature films quickly followed, including Zak Hilditch's much heralded debut, *THESE FINAL HOURS*, selected for Director's Fortnight, Cannes, 2014; and Kulikar Sotho's *THE LAST REEL*, set in Cambodia and winner of the Spirit of Asia Award at the 2014 Tokyo Film Festival. She worked with indigenous choreographer/director Stephen Page on *Sand*, a chapter of the Tim Winton adaptation of *THE TURNING*, which screened at the 2015 Berlinale, and continued this successful collaboration on *SPEAR*, a visually stunning film story told through movement and dance, which premiered at the Toronto and Adelaide film festivals in 2015.

Her most recent projects include the TV series *ROMPER STOMPER*, 2017, a major hit for streaming service STAN; and the acclaimed *SEVEN TYPES OF AMBIGUITY*, 2016, a six-part series for Matchbox Pictures/ABC, directed by Glendyn Ivin, Matt Saville and Ana Kokkinos. For this she won an AACTA Award for Best Cinematography in Television, becoming the first female cinematographer ever to win this award.

In the field of video art, Bonnie has worked with video artist Angelica Mesiti for many years, photographing *RAPTURE*, winner of the Blake prize, and *CITIZENS BAND*, which won the Anne Landa Award. Recent collaborations include the inaugural Ian Potter Moving Image commission for ACMI – *THE CALLING* – a three channel installation shot in Greece, Turkey and the Canary Islands. Their next project is the Australian Pavilion of the 2019 Venice Biennale.

LIZ WATTS – EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Liz Watts is an independent producer and founding partner of Porchlight Films based in Sydney. Liz is currently in production reteaming with David Michôd for his feature *THE KING*, partnering with Plan B producers Dede Gardner and Jeremy Kleiner, written by David Michôd and Joel Edgerton, starring Timothee Chalamet for Netflix. Liz is also producing Justin Kurzel's *TRUE HISTORY OF THE KELLY GANG*, based on Peter Carey's book of the same name, and adapted by Shaun Grant, which stars George MacKay, Nicholas Hoult, Essie Davis, Charlie Hunnam and Russell Crowe.

Liz's recent work includes producing the feature film *MARY MAGDALENE*, with See-Saw's Iain Canning and Emile Sherman, directed by Garth Davis, starring Rooney Mara, Joaquin Phoenix, Chiwetel Ejiofor and Tahar Rahim for Universal International Pictures.

Liz produced the ABC Television 6 part comedy series with creator Nakkiah Lui, *KIKI AND KITTY* which aired in December 2017, and is Executive Producer on the US series adaptation of *ANIMAL KINGDOM* for TNT (John Wells, Jonathan Lisco) currently airing with a third season on order.

Liz's feature credits as Producer include the feature film *ANIMAL KINGDOM* (2010, Director David Michôd, nominated for an Academy Award and Golden Globe in 2011), *THE HOME SONG STORIES* (2007, Director Tony Ayres), *LITTLE FISH* (2005, Director Rowan Woods), Cannes and Sundance selected *JEWBOY* (2005, Director Tony Krawitz), and *WALKING ON WATER*, (2002 Director Tony Ayres). Liz also produced German Australian co-production *LORE*, directed by Cate Shortland, and *DEAD EUROPE*, directed by Tony Krawitz, with Emile Sherman & Iain Canning, both of which premiered at Festival Special Presentation Toronto International Film in 2012. Liz' feature *THE ROVER*, reteaming with writer/director David Michôd, premiered in Official Selection Cannes Film Festival in 2014 and starred Guy Pearce and Robert Pattinson, and sold in over 35 territories worldwide.

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The female body as a landscape on which
life's cruelties are brutally rendered.

It's a thrilling time to be a female filmmaker! *UNDERTOW* is a female-driven story, created by a proudly female-strong crew. The #MeToo and #TimesUp movement erupted during our post-production and mirrored the issues the film explores.

UNDERTOW is the story of two women whose lives become dangerously enmeshed. Grieving the loss of her stillborn baby, Claire becomes suspicious of her husband's relationship with a feisty young woman, Angie. When she discovers Angie is pregnant, Claire develops an increasingly irrational obsession with her that puts both their lives at risk. Only when Claire is confronted with the brutal truth behind Angie's pregnancy can both women begin to heal.

I am fascinated by the struggle between our animal and civilised selves, and what happens when we try to suppress the primal, destructive parts of our nature. Before too long these taboo parts rise to the surface with redoubled force and often dangerous consequences. *UNDERTOW* explores the female body as a terrain on which the scars of this battle are violently inscribed.

There is a primal energy to the performances and the shooting style; this treatment of the female body as a landscape, and the exploration of our barely repressed animal selves, are themes that fascinate me and emerge in much of my work. The cinematic gaze in *UNDERTOW* is truthful, unflinching, compassionate and unapologetically female.

The film is set in and around my hometown Geelong – a deeply personal landscape for me – where vast wild beaches contrast with the built-up city, and the scars of industry linger on the bay – a rich metaphor for the struggle depicted in the story.

This story has evolved with me through my own experience of pregnancy, pregnancy loss and motherhood. I am passionate about representing the lives of women; the complex relationship with our bodies, our sexuality, and our role as the bearers of life. As the #MeToo movement continues to empower women and men across the world to speak up and act, *UNDERTOW* has a fierce and timely resonance.



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KEY CAST

LAURA GORDON – CLAIRE

Laura Gordon will next star in Miranda Nation's debut feature *UNDERTOW* and the second series of the much-anticipated Foxtel drama *SECRET CITY*.

Laura recently appeared in the ABC drama *HARROW*, the Seven Network bio-pic *HOGES the Paul Hogan Story*, the US series *HUNTERS* for Syfy, Sotiris Dounoukos' *JOE CINQUE'S CONSOLATION* which premiered at the 2016 Toronto Film Festival, Matthew Moore's short *PROBLEM PLAY* and Stephen Sewell's *EMBEDDED* which premiered at the 2016 Sydney Film Festival.

Laura first came to prominence following her appearance in Alkinos Tsilimidos' gritty drama *EM 4 JAY*. Starring as a heroin addict, her performance in the film attracted critical acclaim and led to her international debut in the fifth instalment of the popular *SAW* franchise, directed by David Hackl. Laura has also appeared in Michael Rymer's *FACE TO FACE*. The film received numerous festival awards including Best Film at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival and Laura received a 2011 IF Award nomination for Best Actress for her performance in the film. She also starred in the Ben Briand's short film *APRICOT*, which was the winner of the Audience Award for Best Narrative Film at the inaugural Vimeo Festival in New York. Her other feature film credits include *COME BACK TO ME*, *ALIEN STRAIN*, *FIVE MOMENTS OF INFIDELITY* and *TOM WHITE*. Laura's other television credits include *WINNERS & LOSERS*, *MISS FISHER MURDER MYSTERIES 3*, *RIZZOLI AND ISLES*, *MAJOR CRIMES*, *LOWDOWN*, *BED OF ROSES*, *TWENTYSOMETHING*, *CITY HOMICIDE*, *UNDERBELLY*, *SCOOTER SECRET AGENT*, *BLUE HEELERS* and the fantasy Disney series, *LEGEND OF THE SEEKER*.

In theatre, Laura has performed in numerous productions for the Melbourne Theatre Company and Redstitch Actors theatre, where she received a Green Room Award nomination for her performance in *BLACK MILK*.

OLIVIA DEJONGE – ANGIE

Internationally recognised for her starring role in M. Night Shyamalan's box office hit *THE VISIT* Olivia DeJonge is a star on the rise. Her previous feature credits include Caryn Waechter's thriller *THE SISTERHOOD OF NIGHT* opposite Laura Fraser. Following *The Visit* Olivia went on to roles in the Cairnes' brothers upcoming feature film *SCARE CAMPAIGN* followed by the Miranda Nation directed feature film *UNDERTOW* and she has just wrapped her latest film *STRAY DOLLS* directed by Sonejuhi Sinha in New York.

Her on-screen debut in Maziar Lahooti's short film *GOOD PRETENDER*, earned Olivia the 24th Western Australian Screen Award for Best Actress and she was nominated for the 2011 AACTA Most Outstanding Newcomer Award by the Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts. Her other short film credits include Steve Fleming's comedy *POLARISED* and Rebecca Ciallella's *ELEVEN THIRTY*.

Cast as the female lead in TNT's drama pilot *WILL* which chronicles William Shakespeare's twenties and was directed by Shekhar Kapur, the pilot has since gone into series and is currently shooting in the UK. Olivia previously featured as Shaneen Quigg/Tara Swift in Playmaker's drama series *HIDING* alongside James Stewart, Kate Jenkinson and Lincoln Younes which premiered on ABC TV in 2015.

Olivia was nominated for Best Performance in a Feature Film Lead Young Actress (14 - 21 years) at the Young Artist Awards for her role in M. Night Shyamalan's *THE VISIT*.

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ROB COLLINS – DAN

Born and raised in Darwin, Rob Collins graduated from the National Institute for Dramatic Arts in 2013 where he was awarded the prestigious Roger Allen & Maggie Gray Scholarship for the title role in OTHELLO. Rob's theatre credits include a national tour of THE LION KING in the role of 'Mufasa' and as 'Lysander' in Sydney Theatre Company's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Rob's Television credits include 'Jack' in the hit Network Ten drama-series THE WRONG GIRL, 'Phil' in the second series of GLITCH, the co-lead of the ABC/Sundance Channel television series CLEVERMAN and 'Joe Sullivan' in Foxtel's upcoming SECRET CITY: UNDER THE EAGLE.

Most recently, Rob has finished filming alongside Noomi Rapace and Yvonne Strahovski in Kim Farrant's new Australian Thriller ANGEL OF MINE.

JOSH HELMAN – BRETT

Josh recently finished shooting the Warner Bros pilot THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT after joining the cast of M. Night Shymalan's psychological thriller WAYWARD PINES on Fox. Previously being seen on the Golden Globe nominated Starz original drama FLESH AND BONE, directed by David Michod (ANIMAL KINGDOM). He was last seen in the biopic feature film MY NAME IS LENNY, prior to directing and starring in the award winning film KATE CAN'T SWIM. Previous credits include George Miller's Mad Max film FURY ROAD alongside Tom Hardy, Nicholas Hoult and Charlize Theron, the Emmy winning HBO/Playtone mini-series THE PACIFIC, and the Oscar nominated drama ANIMAL KINGDOM.

Josh is best known for playing 'Major Bill Stryker' in the blockbuster X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST and X-MEN: APOCALYPSE alongside Hugh Jackman and Jennifer Lawrence.

Prior to building momentum in film, Josh followed up his formal training in Australia by spending nine months in New York studying and working in theater, including a production of PLAY WITH THE PENGUIN, which earned him strong notices from the community. In LA, he originated the role of "Chad" in the play SMALL ENGINE REPAIR opposite Jon Bernthal.



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PRODUCTION NOTES

CINEMATOGRAPHY

DOP Bonnie Elliott and I collaborated on our short film PERCEPTION in 2012 and ever since then we have been talking and dreaming UNDERTOW. In 2014 we went on our first recce to Geelong and the Victorian coast where Bonnie shot a series of images that would strongly inform our aesthetic discussions. We spoke a lot about the female gaze; we both felt passionately about depicting nudity and sex in a way that felt authentic and non-gratuitous – our aim was to create an honest and visceral portrait of a woman's troubled relationship with her body.

The storytelling is often subjective: to bring the viewer into Claire's unreliable POV Bonnie and I used close ups, reflections and fluid handheld camerawork. This intimate story telling contrasts with tableaux-like wide shots depicting the vast beauty of the coastline and the sprawling industrial landscapes of Geelong. A key idea was the Doppelganger relationship between the two women and we emphasised this connection with a use of mirroring shots and frames. The colour palette was designed to initially contrast Claire and Angie's worlds – Claire existing in muted spaces of browns, blues and greens, while Angie's world is more vivid – reds, oranges, pinks. As their worlds collide, the colours bleed into each other so that Claire's world becomes richer and more heightened.



PRODUCTION DESIGN

Geelong has a unique landscape – a fascinating mix of industrial, coastal and rural – and we highlighted this in UNDERTOW, contrasting the coastal township where Claire and Dan live with the degraded industrial landscape of Angie's world. At the start of the film, Claire largely exists in enclosed spaces with a controlled aesthetic – house, car, hospital – symbolising her attempt to order her life and suppress her grief.

Angie's world is on the fringe of the city; she exists in darker, dirtier spaces; with splashes of deep colour – symbolising emotion, volatility, fecundity. As Claire and Angie begin to cross-over and their stories to merge, they also begin to inhabit each other's worlds. Production Designer Penny Southgate and I worked closely together to create these contrasting worlds. We discovered real locations around Geelong that perfectly fitted the story and themes – the Pier, the Sphinx, the old Power Station – each lending authenticity and richness to the overall vision.

Claire's and Dan's house was an important discovery – a character in its own right, full of angles and reflective surfaces – a metaphor for the distance between them and their unspoken but pervasive grief.

UNDERTOW

PRODUCTION NOTES

LOCATION – GEELONG AND THE SURF COAST

The writer/director, Miranda Nation, grew up in Geelong and her family still lives there. Miranda always knew she wanted to set her debut feature in Geelong and down the Surf Coast. The striking juxtaposition of the wild beaches and the old industrial skyline of Geelong perfectly illustrated the emotional conflict of the lead character, Claire.

Miranda and myself spent many trips going down to Geelong and the Surf Coast scouting locations and connecting with the local community. We were embraced by the City of Greater Geelong Council, the Surf Coast Shire Council, the Geelong Chamber of Commerce, the Committee for Geelong, the Geelong Performing Arts Centre, the Great Ocean Road Committee, the National Wool Museum, many local businesses such as The Pier, the Sphinx Hotel and the Corio Bay Motel and the many, many wonderful locals who helped us so generously. The local media outlets continually ran stories on our progress and helped us with call outs for extras in our crowd scenes. We were constantly overwhelmed and thankful for such love and support from everyone!

I moved down from Sydney and lived in Geelong for 4 months of the production and we accommodated our entire crew in Geelong and Torquay. We all loved filming and living in Geelong and down the Surf Coast, bringing back happy family holiday memories for many of the Melbourne-based crew.

The locations around Geelong and the Surf Coast are an essential character in *UNDERTOW* - showcasing the unique nature of the area and making such a stunning contribution to the film.

Lyn Norfor, Producer



UNDERTOW

CREDITS

Director

Miranda Nation

Writer

Miranda Nation

Producer

Lyn Norfor

Executive Producers

Liz Watts

Sheila Jayadev

Prue Williams

John Molloy

Mitu Bhowrick

Director of Photography

Bonnie Elliott ACS

Production Designer

Penelope Southgate

Editors

Julie-Anne De Ruvo

Nick Meyers ASE

Costume Designer

Stacey O'Connor

Original Music

Lisa Gerrard

James Orr

Raul Sanchez i Jorge

Sound Designer

Liam Egan

Casting

Marianne Jade

Maura Fay Casting

Line Producer

Antje Kulpe

UNDERTOW

PRODUCED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE CITY OF GREATER GEELONG

FINANCED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE UNDERTOW TRUST

FINANCED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF DEFINITION FILMS

PRODUCED WITH THE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OF
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