

Measure for Measure Q&A with director PAUL IRELAND

What drew you (and the sadly-departed Damian Hill [aka Dame]) adapt this mélange of Shakespearian material in the context of contemporary Melbourne – especially after your last film *Pawno*?

*We both loved interweaving stories that are full of different characters and very multi-layered. Using **Measure for Measure** as a loose story structure allowed us to explore the multi cultural melting-pot that Melbourne is and align it with stories of love, crime and corruption. And it gave us an excuse to sit and talk the utmost shit, and laugh and hopefully come-up with something in between, that we could make into a film.*

Did you draw inspiration from other modern-day Shakespearian adaptations?

*No not really; we really only used the outline of the story, so it's very loosely based on the source material - I suppose in the same way that **My Own Private Idaho** was based on **Henry V**.*

The film is distinctly Melbournian. How does our city lend itself to the adaptation of this story?

*Dame and I loved the landscape of Melbourne as a city. So, as we did with **Pawno**, our first film, where we set-out to make Footscray a main character in the film, we equally wanted to make the Commission Flats as big a character in **Measure For Measure**. We attempted to make them a sort of city-within-a-city. So, by filming many iconic areas around Melbourne and with the City looming largely in the background it helped us cement this.*

Why do you think audiences love a gangster story? What are some of your filmic influences from this genre?

*I feel audiences love a good gangster / crime story as it allows them to jump into a world they can read a lot about but very rarely visit. But, to me, this is as much a love story as a gangster film. I have always loved a good old Gangster story going back to the old James Cagney films like **Angels With Dirty Faces** and one of my all-time favorites is Sergio Leone's **Once upon a time in America** and then you can throw-in **Scarface**, **Goodfellas**, **Casino** - all classic films of that genre. But I actually feel what made Dame and I go down this path was after watching a very confronting but beautiful Belgium film called **Black**, directed by Adil el Arbi and Bilall Fa llah at the black nights film festival in Estonia, when we were there with **Pawno**.*

Megan gives a brilliant performance alongside established actors including Hugo Weaving. Can you tell us about the process of assembling this talented cast?

Dame and I always had Hugo in mind when putting together the character of Duke - why wouldn't you? He is one of the world's best actors and to get him to come and play the role was a great boost for us and the film. The next piece of the jigsaw was to get our two young lovers; we cast extensively for these two roles, but I just kept coming back to Megan and Harrison, who I feel are both beautiful in this, both giving very natural and emotional performances. The rest of the cast - Faysall Bazzi, Dan Henshall, Doris Younane, John Brumpton - are some of this country's top talent. But for me it is Mark Leonard Winter, who stepped-in after the sudden death of Dame to play the part of Angelo and who I feel gives an amazingly layered performance in this role - I will forever be in his debt. Of course, none of the above would have been possible without the talents of the great casting director Thea Mcleod.

The film deals with some weighty subject matter, including gangs, violence, forbidden love, race, religion. What do you hope audiences will take away from the experience of seeing this film?

First of all, I hope they have a rewarding experience and that the film takes them on a journey. But I feel that the main messages of the film are about Love, Compassion and Tolerance: Three ingredients the world should be practicing a lot more of. Come along and enjoy!