

# EMO

THE MUSICAL

*e-mo [i mō]* An entire subculture of people (usually angst-y teens) with a fake personality.

**TAGLINE:**

Finally a musical for those who don't like musicals.

**LOGLINE:**

A sullen high-school student whose life is defined by what he hates finds love with a blindly optimistic Christian girl, much to the annoyance of his angst-filled band mates and her evangelistic brethren.

**SPECIFICATIONS:**

Type: Feature Film  
Genre: High School Musical  
Elevated by: Coming of Age, Romance, Buddy Antics, Turf War and Satire  
Tone: Irreverent  
Themes: Extremism, Difference, Conformity, Young Love  
Running Time: 94 mins  
Audience: Primary 15-24, gender neutral  
Secondary 24-35 female skewed  
Film References: *Election, Mean Girls, Cry Baby, Pitch Perfect.*  
Comp's: *Easy A, Warm Bodies, If I Stay, Saved.*

Writer/Director: Neil Triffett  
Producer: Lee Matthews  
Exec Producers: Yael Bergman, Jonathan Page, Shaun Miller  
Songbook: Neil Triffett in collaboration

Language: English  
Format: Digital HD/DCP  
Aspect Ratio: 2.39/1  
Premiering: MIFF 2016  
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Developed and Produced with the support of Screen Australia, Film Victoria and MIFF Premiere Fund.



### **SHORT SYNOPSIS:**

Ethan is an Emo who has just been expelled from his private-school after attempting suicide in the courtyard. On his first day at his new school – the dilapidated Seymour High - he meets Trinity, a beautiful (but totally naive) Christian girl who is desperate to convert him to Jesus. But joining the Christian evangelists is the last thing on Ethan's mind. What he really wants is to join the school alternative rock band, 'Worst Day Ever' and to be part of the Emo clique, led by the enigmatic and dangerous, Bradley. After a successful audition Ethan is welcomed into the Emo world and embraces his image – complete with black eye-liner and an violently possessive girlfriend, Roz. But Ethan can't stop thinking about Trinity, who is herself stuck in a restrictive world of dogma and denial. With the upcoming rock competition bringing tensions in the school at to an all time high, and with the burgeoning turf war between the Christians and the Emo's set to explode at any moment, Ethan is torn between factions and forced to confront the harebrained actions of his friends and question who he has become.

### **LONG SYNOPSIS:**

Ethan is in the unfortunate position of being the only Emo at an uptight private school. Bullied and harassed several times too many, Ethan brings a noose to school and stages a suicide attempt in the school grounds. He is expelled.

Six months later, Ethan arrives at his new school, Seymour High. He is quickly the target of bullies again and is annoyed by Isaac, the proselytising leader of the school's flailing Christian group. But there is a light of hope too; there is a real actual Emo clique at the school and if Ethan gets into their band, 'Worst Day Ever', they might actually like him. Although he won't admit it, he is also flattered that Trinity, the cute Christian girl, has a crush on him.

Ethan auditions for Worst Day Ever and impresses the band with his insane guitar skills. However Bradley, the Emo leader obsessed with winning the State School Rock Competition, remains sceptical about how "Emo" Ethan really is. He doesn't want to be embarrassed at the competition, especially in front of his idol, Doug Skeleton, an Emo rock god who's explosive and controversial on-stage antics are the stuff of legend. So Ethan tells a lie – he flaunts his suicide attempt by claiming it was genuine – and it works. He has his spot in the band.

For the first time in his life Ethan is accepted. He is placed in a relationship with Roz, the band's bassist, and is invited to parties. Everyone knows his name. Even Ethan's suicide attempt is morbidly celebrated with Ethan becoming known as "the suicide guy".

Behind the scenes, Ethan and Trinity start secretly dating and things are complicated even further when Isaac signs the Christian band up for the Rock Competition. If Christians from surrounding schools attend the competition, they will easily outvote an Emo audience, which terrifies Bradley. The two groups are now

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at war. They plan gruelling rehearsal schedules, steal music room bookings and report one another for skipping classes.

Ethan and Trinity's relationship hits obstacles. Trinity fears her own sexual desire and keeps trying to baptise Ethan, while Ethan is torn between his affection for Trinity and his desire to impress his bandmates. In a moment of honesty, Ethan confides to Trinity that he actually chickened out of the suicide attempt at his last school and simply told his band that it was true to impress them. He begs Trinity not to tell anyone and she agrees.

When Ethan tries to break up with Roz, the band begins imploding. Bradley discovers a Bible in Ethan's bag, which exposes Ethan's relationship with Trinity and Ethan is forced to break up with her to stay in the band. Heartbroken by Ethan's betrayal, Trinity goes with Isaac to a Christian counselling group where she lets slip that Ethan's suicide attempt wasn't genuine. Isaac takes note of Ethan at school, telling everyone he is a faker and jeopardising Worst Day Ever's reputation at the Rock Competition. Ethan plans revenge against the Christians. He and his friends break into the School Chapel with the intention just to destroy the Christian instruments, but things go awry and they accidentally burn the pulpit before fleeing the scene.

Ethan knows things have gone too far but is scared to confess. Desperate to put another nail in the Christians coffin by making them a band member short, Bradley outs Peter - a closeted gay Christian boy - so they he is sent to conversion therapy and won't be able to play. This is too much for Ethan and he quits the band.

Ethan has hit rock bottom, with no band and no girlfriend. In a moment of clarity, Ethan realises he must make things up to Trinity. He dresses in conservative Christian attire and offers to take Peter's place in the band at the School Rock Competition. He even allows Isaac to baptise him, but Trinity is not impressed. She accuses Ethan of being a sheep, not having beliefs of his own and just doing what others want - which is what got him in trouble in the first place.

Before the Emo band can play in the competition, Isaac gives the school the results of a DNA test that proves the Emos caused the pulpit fire. The band is disqualified and Bradley snaps, pulling a knife on Isaac. Ethan diffuses the situation by taking blame for the fire, saying if he hadn't been pretending to be someone he wasn't then nothing would have happened. He apologises to the Christians and publicly admits he is in love with Trinity. The officials agree to let the Emos play, but at the end of the song Bradley is tasered and taken away by police for threatening Isaac.

Trinity and Ethan reconcile and promise to accept each other's differences. They leave their friends behind and walk off into the suburbs, talking hand-in-hand.



## WRITER/DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

There's something fun about trapping an Emo in a musical. Shortly after they appeared on the pop culture scene, Emos became the butt of jokes about self-obsessed teenagers with minor problems - but they made us feel uncomfortable too. Emos asked us why we had to obsess about being happy all the time, why we had to conform. They were, and remain, a dangerous idea. Which is why they're such fun candidates to stick in a musical.

The film is satirical and irreverent in tone, similar to works such as *Pitch Perfect*, *Mean Girls* and *Saved!*, while following the trajectory of *Romeo and Juliet* (without the final suicide... just...). There are many of the tropes you will see in teen films, from the band competition to the new kid struggling to fit in, but *Emo* sees these events through the eyes of subgroups that we seldom get to see on screen. These kids don't want to be in a musical. They don't want to win prom. They don't care about the battle to save the school that happens in the background of the film. They just want to dress cool and feel miserable. Likewise, the Christian characters might find themselves in a popular faith-group if they went to an American school, but in this world they are struggling to get numbers, with only four Christians on campus.

Much of my challenge as director was to stay true to the fast pace of the script. In addition to the two leads there are six supporting character arcs that happen within the course of the film, all of which add to the exploration of group-mentality and self-expression. Many of these supporting stories are fresh and exciting purely because they are fast-paced, satirical and light, and not the central-focus that they would be in other films.

Much of the humour and effect of the film is built through contrast and comparisons. As the characters are exaggerated opposites of one another, so too are their worlds. The Emos' world is dark and grungy, they like to keep the windows partially closed without many bright colours. This contrasts with the colourful Glee-like world of the school, in which the Christians can hang out in sunshine, and gives the Emos something to detest and rage against.

This film is a musical but it has its own sets of rules and style. Musically it is divided into three sections: The songs of the Emos, which are along the more upbeat punk-end of the *My Chemical Romance* spectrum; The Christians' songs which are pop and Hillsong-esque; and the songs shared between Ethan and Trinity that are wistful folky-pop tunes. It is in the songs that the characters can be their most flawed and honest, though they never quite realise how sad it makes them look.

And finally, despite being a musical, there is no dancing. An Emo wouldn't be caught dead dancing in this movie.

Neil Triffett, Writer/Director



## PRODUCER'S STATEMENT:

The Musical has always been an audience favourite. From the cinematic musical spectacles of the golden age of Hollywood to the film adaptations of classic Broadway fare, it is a genre that has remained relevant and groundbreaking, due in part to its ability to talk to a multi-generational audience through songs that can hide complex themes within their upbeat tempos.

When Neil Triffett confessed to me that he'd been working on a musical about Emo's since his late teens I immediately loved the concept. What more perfect way to display the angst and secularism of teenage life than by letting that angst be sung by a reluctant and self-reclusive Emo? And many agreed.

With the help of Screen Australia we produced a short version of the film in 2014 that was accepted into over two-dozen festivals around the world and was honoured with a 'Special Mention' - runner-up award for the Best Short Film Crystal Bear in the Generation+ competition at the 2014 Berlinale. The accolades reinforced that the story – with its mishmash of genres and irreverent tone - had indeed found an audience and that we could make the leap to tell the whole story of Ethan and the Emo world as a feature length film.



Two years later we are thrilled with the result. *Emo the Musical* is an irreverent and satirical adult look at high school life and what it takes to fit in, following a coming-of-age love story between two very different people. But at its heart the film and the story is more than that. By focusing on a bizarre conflict in the lead up to a battle of the bands, the film serves as a parable for tribal wars around the world and explores the issues of identity, individuality and extremism through groups less familiar to the Australian narrative (Emos and Evangelicals).

Its adult humour talks directly to teenagers eager to see a relatable but heightened version of themselves on the screen, yet it primarily engages a young adult audience at its core and a young-at-heart older audience too, happy to reminisce about previous teenage lives of friendship and angst, love and heartache.

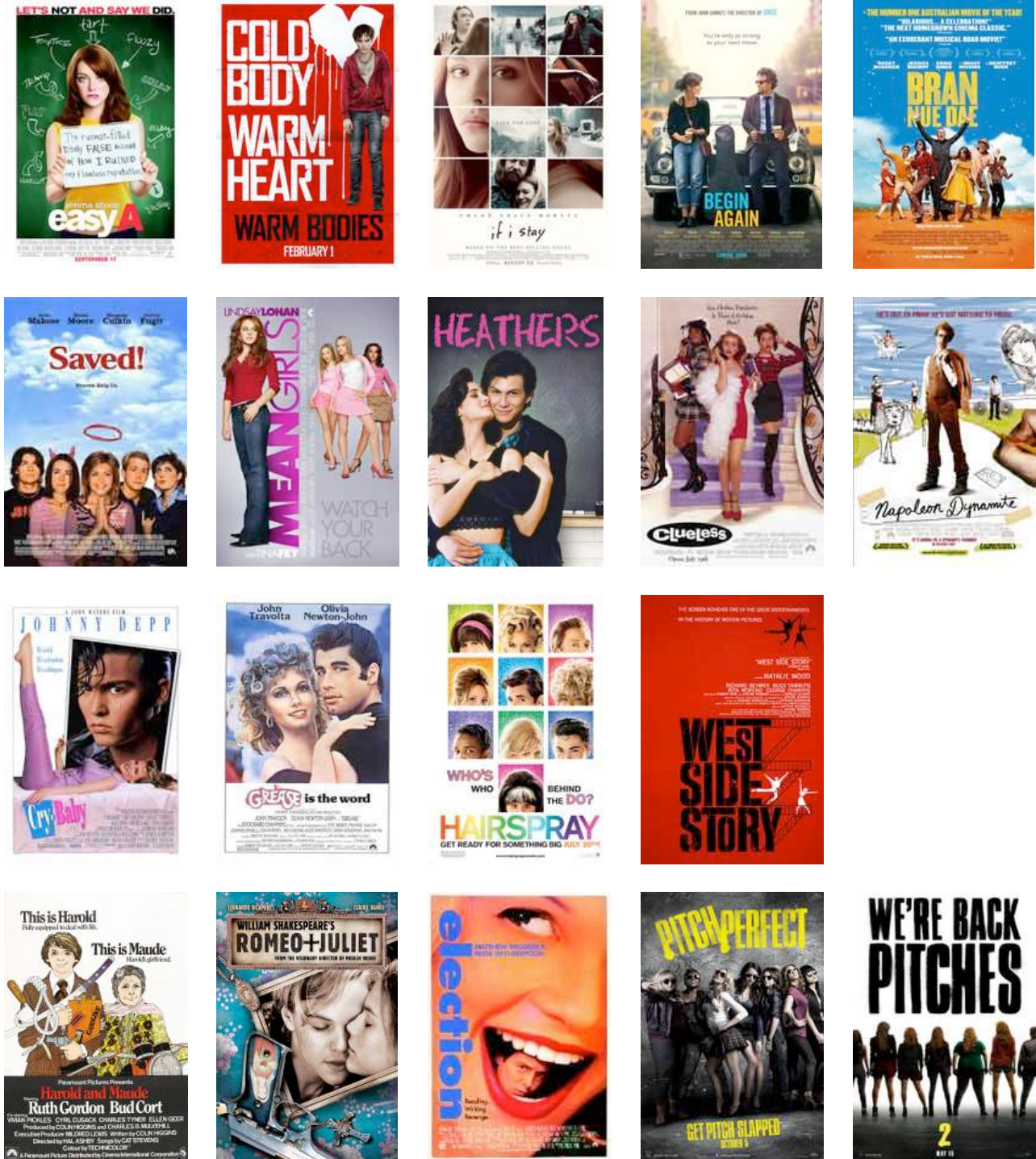
Lee Matthews, Producer



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## COMP'S AND FILM REFERENCES:





## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS:

### WRITER/DIRECTOR Neil Triffett

Neil graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts as the Most Outstanding Undergraduate Student of 2010. Since then he has gone on to write and direct a number of short films, including *Sarah*, *Liar* and *Shoplifting*. In 2013 he completed a Screen Australia supported development attachment with Lin Pictures (*Sherlock Holmes*, *Gangster Squad*) for six months in Los Angeles; before extending his experience on the sets of *Partisan* (2015), the ABC telemovie *Cliffy* and as Digital Storyteller in Residence at Platform Youth Theatre. In 2014 his short film *Emo (the musical)* was awarded a 'special mention' at the 2014 Berlinale, as well as Best Comedy, Best Score and the Craft Award at The St Kilda Film Festival. Neil was born in Tasmania in 1988.



### Selected Writer/Director Credits:

*Liar*, 13min Romantic Thriller, 2014 Prod: Ivan Bradara  
*Sorry Mum*, 30min Satirical Cabaret Show, 2013 Prod: Alia Vryens  
*Emo (the musical)*, 16min Satirical Musical, 2013 Prod: Lee Matthews  
*A play with a Goblin in it*, 20 min Documentary, 2011, Prod: La Mama, Sydney Road Community School  
*The Sneeze (Vortex Comedy Ep #4)*, 5min Comedy, Children's Television C31 Broadcast, 2011  
*Is Love Enough?*, 35min Documentary, 2011, Prod: Bendigo Health  
*Politics and Art*, 5min Experimental Documentary, 2011, Prod: Melbourne Workers' Theatre  
*Shoplifting*, 14min Black Comedy, 2010, Prod: Lee Matthews  
*Sarah*, 9min Drama, 2009, Prod: Siobhan Jackson  
*Derek*, 4min Drama, 2009, Prod: Siobhan Jackson  
*A Brief History of Mime*, 8min Comedy, 2008  
*Simone*, 7min Drama, 2008  
*Biog*, 7min Drama, 2007

### Recognition:

Screen Australia's international development attachment to Lin Pictures Hollywood, 2015  
Awarded 'special mention' runner up to the Crystal Bear for best short film, Berlinale Generation, 2014  
Awarded Best Short, Best Score and the Craft Award, St Kilda Film Festival 2014  
Nominated for Best Director and Best Short Film, St Kilda Film Festival 2014  
Recipient: the VCA Professional Pathways scholarship, 2013  
Nominated: Best Young Australian Filmmaker, Byron Bay Film Festival, 2012  
Awarded: Audience Choice Award; Made in Melbourne Closing Night, 2011  
Awarded: Jump Cut Tertiary Award; Bayside Film Festival, 2011  
Awarded: Best Short Film; Show Us Your Shorts program, Warburton Film Festival, Australia, 2011  
Nominated: Best Young Australian Filmmaker, Byron Bay Film Festival, 2011  
Awarded: Most Outstanding Undergraduate Student, VCA, 2010  
Nominated: Best Achievement in Directing, VCA, 2010  
Best Tropfest entry, Wide Angle Tasmania, 2008

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**PRODUCER:** Lee Matthews is a Melbourne based producer experienced in the production and development of feature-length films, television comedies, documentaries and short films.

Prior to filmmaking, Lee worked in arts funding and festivals management, include managing and producing the Melbourne Midsumma Festival as well as Queer Screen's Sydney Mardi Gras Film Festival.

He graduated from Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) in 2010 with a postgraduate diploma in Film & Television (Producing) and was accepted into Screen Producers Australia's 'One's to Watch' emerging producer program the following year. In 2013 he was commissioned by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) to produce the broadcast documentary *Our Little Secret*, and received a short film finishing funds grant from Screen Australia for the short of *Emo (the Musical)*, which went on to receive the 'Special Mention' runner-up award for the Best Short Film Crystal Bear in the Generation+ competition at the 2014 Berlinale.



He is currently developing a number of projects ranging from socially-themed contemporary comedies with Victorian filmmaking collective The Comedy Cartel, to audience and market-driven feature films and television documentaries through his company Matthewswood Productions.

## Producer Credits:

*The Heckler*, 90min Feature length Body Swap Comedy, 2014 Dir: Ben Plazzer  
*Comedians in Bars drinking Beers*, 8 x 10min Documentary Series, 2015 Dir's: Ben Plazzer and Steve Mitchell  
*Our Little Secret*, 30min Broadcast Documentary for ABC, 2013 Dir: Monique Schafter  
*Understanding Uncle Kevin*, 20min Online Documentary for Aboriginal Affairs, 2015 Dir: Lee Matthews  
*Emo (the musical)*, 16min Satirical Musical, 2013 Dir: Neil Triffett  
*The Gay Agenda*, 3min Online Documentary for ABC, 2013 Dir: Anna McGrath  
*Hey Make Believer*, 4min Music Video, 2012 Dir: Stuart Willis  
*PE:EP*, 12min Thriller, 2012 Dir: Christopher HF Mitchell  
*Alphamum01*, 7min Comedy, 2012 Dir: Marissa Cooke  
*You & I, Brigitte*, 14min Twisted Romance, 2011 Dir: Jessica Barclay Lawton  
*The Fat Lady Swings*, 10min Crime Comedy, 2011 Dir: Christopher HF Mitchell  
*Continental Drift*, 15min Romance, 2011 Dir: Anna Helme  
*Night's End*, 8min Drama, 2011 Dir: Evan Dowling  
*Meth to Madness*, 7min Zombie Horror, 2011 Dir: Christopher HF Mitchell  
*Finger Food*, 6min Comedy, 2011, Dir: Chas Fisher  
*Shoplifting*, 14min Black Comedy, 2010, Dir: Neil Triffett  
*Land of Returns*, 9min Period Western, 2010, Dir: Chas Fisher  
*Abraham*, 14min Dramatic Thriller, 2010 Dir: James Robertson  
*Housemates*, 5min Drama, 2009 Wri/Dir: Lee Matthews





## NEIL AND LEE'S FILM FESTIVAL CREDITS INCLUDE:

Berlinale - Berlin International Film Festival, 2014:  
- awarded 'special mention' runner up to the Crystal Bear for best short film, Generation 14plus.  
Broadcast ARTE Germany, France, 2015  
Glasgow Youth Film Festival, 2015  
Shorts Film Festival Adelaide, 2014  
- awarded Best Young Filmmaker  
Made in Melbourne Film Fest, 2014  
- awarded Opening Night audience choice award  
See The Sound Music Festival, 2014  
Ozu Film Festival Italy, 2014  
Interfilm & Kuki Berlin - Int'l Short Film Fest, 2014  
- won 2<sup>nd</sup> prize of the Teen Screen Comp  
Filmfest FrauenWelten Tuebingen, 2014  
54th Brno 16, Czech Republic, 2014  
Int'l Short Film Festival Cyprus, 2014  
Schlingel Int'l Film Festival Germany, 2014  
Heart of Gold Int'l Film Fest Gympie, 2014  
Vancouver Int'l Film Festival, 2014  
Canberra Short Film Festival, 2014  
Down Under Berlin Film Festival, 2014  
Sarajevo Int'l Film Festival, 2014  
Rhode Island Int'l Film Festival, 2014  
Dungog Film Festival, 2014  
Guanajuato Int'l Film Festival Mexico, 2014  
InDPanda Int'l Film Festival HK, 2014  
Edinburgh Int'l Film Festival, 2014  
Palm Springs Int'l ShortFest, 2014  
Revelation - Perth Int'l Film Festival, 2014  
Hamburg Int'l Short Film Festival, 2014  
St Kilda Film Festival, 2014:  
- won Best Comedy, Best Score and the Craft Award.  
- nominated for Best Director and Best Short Film.  
Reel Shorts Film Festival Canada, May 2014  
FlickerFest Australia, Jan 2014  
Inside Out Toronto 2013  
St Kilda Film Festival 2013:  
- nominated SBS Broadcast award  
Shorts Film Festival Adelaide 2013  
Berlinale Film Cloud 2013  
Melbourne Queer Film Festival, 2013  
Mardi Gras Film Festival, 2013  
Melbourne International Film Festival, 2012  
Cockatoo Island Film Festival, 2012  
Tehran International Short Film Festival, 2012  
Eerie Horror Festival USA, 2012  
Frameline San Francisco, 2012  
Revelation Perth, 2012  
Dungog Film Festival, 2012  
St Kilda Film Festival, 2012  
Liebe Filme Festival, travelling Munich, Koln, Frankfurt and Berlin Germany 2012  
54th Rochester Int'l Film Festival, USA, 2012  
Portugal Underground Film Festival, 2012  
Byron Bay Film Festival, 2012  
Three One Six Oh! Film Festival, 2012  
FlickerFest, 2012  
Finalist, 48 Hour Film Festival, Melbourne 2011  
MUFF's Bloodfest Fantastique, 2011  
- awarded Best Short Film; Best Director.  
Made in Melbourne Film Festival, 2011  
- won Audience Choice Award, Closing Night.  
Hollywood Shorts, 2011  
Canberra Film Festival, 2011  
Melbourne Underground Film Festival, 2011  
Shnit International Short Film Festival, Switzerland, 2011  
Fresh Film Fest, Prague Czech Republic, 2011  
San Diego Christian Film Festival, USA 2011  
Redemptive Storytelling Award' from Redemptive Film Festival, USA, 2011  
Winner: Best Cinematography; Best Editing, Maverick Movie Awards, USA, 2011  
Melbourne University Film Society, 2011  
Awarded: Best Short Film; Show Us Your Shorts program, Warburton, 2011  
Awarded: Professional Excellence Award, Warburton, 2011  
Jump Cut; Bayside Film Festival, 2011  
Dungog Film Festival, 2011  
St Kilda Film Festival, 2011  
Byron Bay Film Festival, 2011  
Melbourne Queer Film Festival, 2010  
Revelation Perth Int'l Film Festival, 2010.



#### KEY CAST & CREW

ETHAN	Benson Jack Anthony
TRINITY	Jordan Hare
BRADLEY	Rahart Adams
ISAAC	Jon Praside
ROZ	Lucy Barrett
PETER	Craig Hyde-Smith
JAY	Ben Bennett
JAMALI	Geraldine Viswanathan
JOSH	Kevin Clayette
MRS DOYLE	Bridie Carter
SUSAN	Natasha Herbert
DOUG SKELETON	Dylan Lewis
PRINCIPLE STEPHENS	Adam Zwar
SISTER KATHLEEN	Heidi Arena
WRITER/DIRECTOR	Neil Triffett
PRODUCER	Lee Matthews
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS	Yael Bergman Jonathan Page Shaun Miller
PRODUCTION MANAGER	Annie Venables
1 <sup>st</sup> ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Jason Faulkner
CASTING DIRECTOR	Thea McLeod
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Ellery Ryan ACS
CAMERA OPERATOR	Sky Davies
KEY GRIP	Richard Allardice
GAFFER	Laurie Fish
LOCATION SOUND MIXER	Lynne Butler
PRODUCTION DESIGNER	Simon McCutcheon
COSTUME DESIGNER	Andrew Infanti
HAIR AND MAKE-UP DESIGNER	Debbie Muller
EDITOR	Ian Carmichael
SONGBOOK	Niel Triffett Craig Pilkington Charlotte Nicdao
SOUND DESIGNER	Brendan Croxon



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Tumblr: <http://emomusical.tumblr.com/>

[www.matthewswood.com](http://www.matthewswood.com)

[www.neiltriffett.com](http://www.neiltriffett.com)

[www.youtube.com/user/MatthewswoodFilms](http://www.youtube.com/user/MatthewswoodFilms)