

WRITTEN AND
DIRECTED BY
SARAH WATT

MY YEAR WITHOUT SEX

PRESS BOOK

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MY YEAR WITHOUT SEX

PRESENTED BY **SCREEN AUSTRALIA** AND **HIBISCUS FILMS**
IN ASSOCIATION WITH **FILM VICTORIA**, **SOUTH AUSTRALIAN FILM CORPORATION**, **ADELAIDE FILM FESTIVAL**
AND **SHOWTIME AUSTRALIA**

NATALIE **SACHA HORLER** ROSS **MATT DAY**
WINONA **KATIE WALL** GREG **FRED WHITLOCK**
MARGARET **MAUDE DAVEY** RUBY **PORTIA BRADLEY**
LOUIS **JONATHAN SEGAT**

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY **SARAH WATT**
PRODUCED BY **BRIDGET IKIN**
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER **BARBARA MASEL**
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS **JOHN MAYNARD**, **ANDREW MYER**,
JOANNA BAEVSKI, **ANDREW BARLOW**, **PAUL WIEGARD**
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **GRAEME WOOD**
EDITOR **DENISE HARATZIS ASE**
PRODUCTION DESIGNER **SIMON McCUTCHEON**
COSTUME DESIGNER **KITTY STUCKEY**
CASTING **JANE NORRIS (MULLINARS CONSULTANTS)**
POST PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR **MARYJEANNE WATT**
LINE PRODUCER **BARBARA GIBBS**

DEVELOPED AND FINANCED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF
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TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Running Time: 96 mins
Length (metres): 2637.59 m
Length (feet): 8653.5 ft
Ratio: 35 mm colour. 1:1.85
Sound: Dolby SR & Dolby Digital
Rating: M

SYNOPSIS

One family. One year. No sex. What else is there?
– Sport, spending, saving, singing, storage solutions,
spiritual stuff, Santa ...

MY YEAR WITHOUT SEX is a kind of a love story
about all the big questions, and even more of the
small ones. Over one messy year, Ross and Natalie
navigate their children, nits, housework, birthdays,
Christmas, faith, football, job insecurity, more nits,
and whether they will ever have sex again.





SARAH WATT

WRITER AND DIRECTOR

Sarah Watt is a writer, director and animator whose first feature film **LOOK BOTH WAYS** premiered at the Adelaide Film Festival in 2005 and was invited to screen in more than 30 film festivals around the world. It was invited to New Films/ New Directors in New York and received a Special Screening at International Critics' Week in Cannes. Among the film's many acknowledgements were the Discovery Award at the Toronto Film Festival; Best Film at the AFI Awards; the FIPRESCI Award at the Brisbane International Film Festival; and Critics' Awards at the Rotterdam Film Festival and the NatFilm Festival in Denmark.

Sarah also received the Best Screenplay and Best Director Awards at the IF, AFI and Australian Film Critics' Awards.

Before **LOOK BOTH WAYS**, Sarah's short animated films had attracted widespread international attention. **SMALL TREASURES** (1995; 15 mins) won – amongst many awards – the Baby Lion for Best Short Film at the Venice Film Festival that year. **LOCAL DIVE** and **LIVING WITH HAPPINESS** followed, both of which screened widely at festivals and theatrically, winning many international and Australian awards.

In 2009, Lothian Children's Books (an imprint of Hachette Australia) will publish **CLEM ALWAYS COULD**, a book for children, which Sarah has written and illustrated.



FILMOGRAPHY

MY YEAR WITHOUT SEX (2009)

96 mins • drama • 35mm • writer/director

LOOK BOTH WAYS (2005)

100 mins • drama • 35mm • writer/director

LIVING WITH HAPPINESS (2001)

6 mins • animation • 35mm • writer/director/producer

WAY OF THE BIRDS (2000)

24 mins • animation • 35mm • director

LOCAL DIVE (1998)

4 mins • animation • 35mm • writer/director/producer

DERWENT ENVY (1998)

15 mins • drama • 16mm • co-writer/director/producer/
co-producer

SMALL TREASURES (1995)

15 mins • animation • 35mm • writer/director/producer

THE WEB SERIES 1 & 2 (1993/4)

5 mins • animations • 35mm • director

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I was interested in how we get through our days and whether they are any better or worse for having been examined. About whether our perception of control – or lack of it – makes any difference to our actual control. I was interested in whether we earn our good or bad luck, or whether it's random. We've been told for many years that we earn it, and if we earn it, then we deserve everything, from luxury cars, and upgrades of everything, to complete and constant happiness.

To explore these ideas I invented a non-ruling class family in an average suburb who could encapsulate all the anxieties and joys that our mostly muddled society has to offer. I wanted the audience to be able to connect with these people and their sadness and happiness. I love the big-ticket life questions writ upon the small domestic stories.

And I wanted the film to be entertaining, to be warm, to use colour as music and music as editorial. I wanted it to be kind of a love story between family and friends. And hopefully a little bit funny.

Sarah Watt, Melbourne





SACHA HORLER

NATALIE

Sacha Horler is an award-winning film and television actor, having won two AFI awards in the same year (1998) – Best Actress for her performance in John Curran’s PRAISE, and Best Supporting Actress for Christina Andreef’s SOFT FRUIT. She also won a Best Supporting Actress AFI for Kathryn Millard’s TRAVELLING LIGHT (2003).

Since graduating from NIDA in 1993, Sacha has regularly performed for the Sydney Theatre Company and for Company B at Belvoir Street.

She played a small role in Sarah Watt’s LOOK BOTH WAYS. Other films include MY MOTHER FRANK (2000), WALK THE TALK, and RUSSIAN DOLL (2001). Her television credits include SECRET BRIDESMAIDS’ BUSINESS, LOVE MY WAY and GRASS ROOTS.

“Actors always talk about wanting to play roles that are really challenging and MY YEAR WITHOUT SEX is right up there with anything I’ve done. Ever.

There’s such humour and warmth and ‘realness’ in the characters Sarah creates. She clearly understands these people. I think there will be a lot of people who will identify with Ross and Natalie’s relationship.

As an actor, you can’t keep a whole fictional year in your head. You just have to think: how can I be as truthful as I can be in this scene, in this moment, in this take?



MATT DAY ROSS

Matt Day has established a reputation as one of Australia's leading film and television actors. His film credits include MURIEL'S WEDDING (1994), DATING THE ENEMY, LOVE AND OTHER CATASTROPHES (1996), and KISS OR KILL (1997) for which he received an Australian Film Critics' Circle Award Nomination and an AFI Award Nomination.

Playing ROSS is Matt's first film role since returning from many years living in the UK. His television credits there include guest roles in HOTEL BABYLON, SECRET DIARY OF A CALL GIRL, THE CHASE, THE MESSAGE and SPOOKS.

His Australian television credits include WATER RATS, HELL HAS HARBOUR VIEWS, THE INFORMANT and most recently TANGLE. On stage, Matt has appeared in SCARLETT O'HARA for the Melbourne Theatre Company and SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION with the Sydney Theatre Company.

Sarah's managed to find the details in the ordinary and make them extraordinary – that's where she finds the drama, in the details of everyday life.

The thing about working with Sarah is that she'd already established a really strong aesthetic with LOOK BOTH WAYS, so I came with a really clear idea about the director's vision and what she might be trying to achieve. It's really a great place to start for an actor.



BRIDGET IKIN PRODUCER

Bridget has produced many films through her company Hibiscus Films, establishing its position as a leading producer of quality specialist cinema. She produced Sarah Watt's debut feature *LOOK BOTH WAYS* (2005) which received many international awards, as well as Best Film at the 2005 AFI Awards.

She produced Jane Campion's *AN ANGEL AT MY TABLE* (Silver Lion Venice Film Festival 1990), Alison Maclean's feature *CRUSH* (In Competition, Cannes, 1992) followed by Clara Law's *FLOATING LIFE* (Silver Leopard, Locarno, 1996).

Additionally, the company has produced many distinctive short films, most notably the memorable *KITCHEN SINK* (director Alison Maclean, In competition Cannes, 1989).

For four years (1996 – 2000), she was the General Manager of SBS Independent, responsible for commissioning more than 400 hours of distinctive Australian drama and documentary.

She was the Associate Director Film of the 2002 Adelaide Festival, whose artistic director was the maverick American director, Peter Sellars. In a world first, the arts festival commissioned four new feature films – for which Bridget was the executive director:

THE TRACKER, *AUSTRALIAN RULES*, *WALKING ON WATER* and *KABBARLI*.

She was a feature film Evaluation Manager at the Film Finance Corporation [now Screen Australia] (2004-6).

“*The idea to work together again with Sarah Watt and Barbara Masel was hatched very organically after we finished LOOK BOTH WAYS. It wasn't long after that, Sarah started writing MY YEAR WITHOUT SEX. I love Sarah's sensibility, and the world of ideas I feel she inhabits and wants to explore, but I also feel I've found a collaborator I really want to continue working with, and that's rare and special.*



BARBARA MASEL

ASSOCIATE
PRODUCER &
SCRIPT EDITOR

Barbara Masel has a long association with script development and production, with a background as a film and television script editor, commissioning editor and dramaturg. She was associate producer and script editor on Sarah Watt's, *LOOK BOTH WAYS* (2005). More recently she was dramaturg and script editor on Tony Ayres' feature film, *THE HOME SONG STORIES* (2007). She was associate producer and co-creator of the television series *EFFIE: JUST QUIETLY* (2001) for Robyn Kershaw Productions.

Between 1996 and 2000, she was Commissioning Editor, Drama at SBS Independent where she commissioned a diverse range of material, including feature films, television series, short films and animations. Prior to this, she script edited *NAKED – STORIES OF MEN* for Jan Chapman Productions and the ABC, and co-produced and created the television series, *SEVEN DEADLY SINS* for Generation Films and the ABC. Writers and directors with whom she has collaborated include: Glenda Adams, Geoffrey Atherden, Andrew Bovell, Ken Cameron, Ian David, Nick Enright, P. J. Hogan, Ray Lawrence, Alison Maclean and Cory Taylor.

Awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study script development methods and practice in the UK, she has worked as a Lecturer in Writing at the Australian Film Television and Radio School, served on its governing Council, and been a script assessor for federal and state funding agencies.

“ Sarah sees humour and drama in places others might overlook; her politics and aesthetic frame these observations and give them meaning. She's able to reflect on the relativity of experience; everything depends on where you're standing. She's able to find the ironies in our small triumphs and private griefs. And she's drawn to those complicated feelings which defy easy summary or classification. I suspect it's why audiences have responded so enthusiastically to her films: the powerful charge of validation we all get from knowing we've been understood.



GRAEME WOOD

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Graeme Wood has worked as a cinematographer on feature films, television series, documentaries and television commercials. He was nominated for a Film Critics' Circle Award for his work on *THE DISH* (2000). His other film credits include Tony Martin's *BAD EGGS*, Esben Storm's *SUBTERANEO*, Richard Lowenstein's *SAY A LITTLE PRAYER* and John Hillcoat's debut *GHOSTS OF THE CIVIL DEAD*.

“MY YEAR WITHOUT SEX is, in a word, human. I just tried to use the most naturalistic and simple lighting that I possibly could. I really do prefer the environment to give you the cues. Having worked in documentaries, I've learned there's an inherent beauty in ordinary places. One of the challenges of this film is that it's so reality-based — real, tiny suburban house, real shopping centres, real real real, all the way through. You could easily overstep the mark to make it fit into your preconception of what a good-looking location would be, and it would spoil it. Low-intervention film-making, I call it.

SIMON McCUTCHEON

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

MY YEAR WITHOUT SEX marks Simon's feature film debut as production designer. The film continues his association with Sarah Watt, having worked on *LOOK BOTH WAYS* as art director. He has since also production designed his second film, *BLESSED* (director Ana Kokkinos). Other credits as art director include the mini-series *THE PACIFIC*, as well as feature films *ROMULUS MY FATHER* and *THE BOOK OF REVELATION*, and a number of the television series.

“Sarah was keen to reflect the arc or trajectory of the story through a changing colour palette. The structure of the film is quite ordered and clear — thirteen months, each with its own title. We thought that changing the colours of each chapter would be one way to enhance this. To a large extent, the different months and their different colours are representing different emotional states. But I didn't want that to be what everyone notices about the film, it should be in the background, subliminal.

PRODUCTION STORY

Sarah Watt began writing the screenplay for MY YEAR WITHOUT SEX early in 2005, shortly after finishing her feature debut, LOOK BOTH WAYS. She says:

I didn't want to make another film with a sex scene in it. So I got the title quite early on! That was one idea. The other ideas seemed to come out of the kind of free-ranging anxiety most people seemed to be expressing when I began writing at the start of 2005.

She was interested in exploring the deeply human need to make meaning out of the apparently random way good fortune and catastrophe disrupt the more predictable trajectories of people's lives. She set about creating a portrait of a family whose fortunes she would attempt to chart over the course of one crowded year.

I tried to think up characters who might represent things we all share, that seem vaguely "normal". Obviously, I tried to resist a caricatured or a clichéd version of normal, but the kind of normal that as many people as possible could relate to ... I guess I think of myself as being fairly typical, so when I experience something more than once, or something happens in my own life or to my friends, or what I hear people talking about around me, I assume it's likely to be stuff we all share.

She embarked on the screenplay with script editor, Barbara Masel, with whom she'd worked on LOOK BOTH WAYS, and

reunited with its producer, Bridget Ikin. It was a collaboration each was keen to repeat. Sarah was also eager to work with others from LOOK BOTH WAYS, such as editor, Denise Haratzis, production designer, Simon McCutcheon (who was art director on the previous film), first assistant director, Chris Odgers, and sound mixer, Peter Smith.

By mid-2007, the film (whose development had been supported by Screen Australia and Fine Cut Films), was ready for financing. Bridget Ikin:

I think that one of the pleasures in Sarah's work is the kind of currency that she brings to her writing. So making the film quickly seemed important. I said to Sarah: I think I can raise a certain amount of money relatively quickly, and if we cast it modestly and work within that parameter, I think we can make the film soon.

Bridget says the successful collaborations forged during LOOK BOTH WAYS formed part of her strategy in financing the new film.

In everyone's book, LOOK BOTH WAYS had been a success; it had been a critical success, a commercial success and had won many awards overseas and in Australia. It sold well overseas. For all our financing partners it had been a productive collaboration and a successful film, so I hoped they would want to invest in Sarah's next film. They all wanted to. It was part of our deliberate "we're not reinventing anything" approach. We were choosing to develop relationships — to work with the same financing team, as well as creative team — and hopefully now also attract the same audience who'd enjoyed LOOK BOTH WAYS.



Within months, Bridget had raised the film's budget with investors Screen Australia, Film Victoria, the Adelaide Film Festival, the South Australian Film Corporation and Showtime Australia. Katrina Sedgwick, director of the Adelaide Film Festival (whose Investment Fund had also previously commissioned LOOK BOTH WAYS) was an eager early investor, offering MY YEAR WITHOUT SEX its premiere in the 2009 Adelaide Film Festival. The film's executive producers were John Maynard, Andrew Myer, Joanna Baevski, Andrew Barlow and Paul Wiegard.

Sarah began the process of casting, auditioning actors for the roles of Natalie and Ross and their children, Louis and Ruby. For the role of Natalie, Sarah was looking for an appealing actor who was prepared to be seen in an unglamorous way, in the frank terms that the script demanded. Sacha Horler had appeared in a small role in LOOK BOTH WAYS. Sarah says:

... (Sacha) was willing to go to all sorts of lengths to be the character ... And she has such an incredible ability to be in the moment while the camera's rolling. You can see the transformation of her thoughts and feelings as they're happening.

For the role of Ross, Natalie cast Matt Day. Sarah comments:

Matt was willing to be a dog, he was willing to forego the alpha male. Again, he just brought a spirit of collaboration to the project. They seemed to fit well together.

Agent Jane Norris, from Mullinars Consulting, drew up a long list of children for the five roles in the film. After an extensive process of auditioning, Sarah settled on new-comer Jonathan Segat in the role of 12-year-old, Louis, and Portia Bradley in the role of his sister, 7-year-old, Ruby.

MY YEAR WITHOUT SEX was shot over 7 weeks from the end of March, through April, 2008, in Melbourne, Victoria, (in locations around Altona and Williamstown); and a few days additional shooting on the Gold Coast in Queensland. The challenge was to create the effect of the story taking place over a twelve-month period, with its seasonal, as well as emotional, shifts.

The film was edited in Melbourne, with sound and digital post-production moving to Adelaide. The film's playful title sequences were created by Maryjeanne Watt and Petrina White, with visual material sourced from the Getty Images library. Sarah saw these still and moving elements has being critical to the film's mode of address.

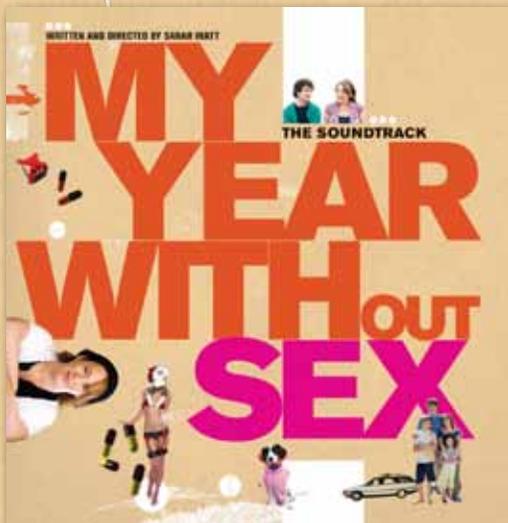
The soundtrack draws on an eclectic mix of mostly Australian songs, (featuring performers such as Bob Evans, El Perro del Mar and Bombazine Black) as well as some familiar international tracks (such as Bananarama). Sarah comments:

I love the energy that songs can bring. I didn't want to underscore the emotion with music, I wanted to provide an editorial over the top of the film. It's more declared this way.



SOUND TRACK

Soundtrack available from all good record stores and iTunes®



- 1. THE WORLD'S GOT EVERYTHING IN IT**
Uncle Bill
- 2. LEFT WITH THE BLUES**
The Renovators
- 3. BOWLER ON A NAIL**
Bombazine Black
- 4. SOON I WILL BE DONE**
Emily Hayes
- 5. GLORY TO THE WORLD**
El Perro Del Mar
- 6. HANDS UP IN THE AIR**
Boom Crash Opera
- 7. DON'T WALK ALONE**
Bob Evans
- 8. JUST A LITTLE BIT OF RAIN**
Mick Harvey
- 9. VENUS**
Bananarama
- 10. UPSET GIRL**
The Honey Eaters
- 11. HARPSICORDS**
Bombazine Black
- 12. HAIR SUIT**
The Vanguards
- 13. NEVER TURNING BACK
(KEEP ON MOVING FORWARD)**
Emily Hayes and Peter Farnan
- 14. MR. E'S BEAUTIFUL BLUES**
Eels
- 15. WAGES OF LOVE**
The Happening Thang
- 16. LAY ME DOWN**
The Audreys
- 17. STICKS**
Bombazine Black
- 18. SO ALIVE**
The Bads
- 19. BEAUTIFUL TO ME**
Little Birdy