

short stories

Four big stories about four very short people

WINNER
Best Documentary Short Form
2006 ATOM Awards

PRESS KIT

Written, Produced & Directed by

MATTHEW DUFFY and STUART McCARNEY

Executive Producer:

TOM ZUBRYCKI

Camera:

CHRIS ROLES

Sound Recordist:

JAMES ENGELS

Editor:

RAY THOMAS

A four-part series airing on SBS Television

Episode 1 9 May 2007

Episode 2 16 May 2007

Episode 3 23 May 2007

Episode 3 30 May 2007

Distributed in Australia by Ronin Films

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Synopsis

Filmed over two years, **short stories** is a 4 x 26 minute documentary series about a group of short statured people who are part of a small community in Sydney's working class western suburbs.

The series is comprised of four remarkable stories - all linked through their association with the NSW short statured basketball side - and follows the extraordinary and compelling life experiences of four memorable individuals.

The series focuses on the characters' lives rather than their disability, but it is their disability that makes their life experience so intense and their stories so compelling.

short stories explores universal themes of life, death, love, identity, family and hope in the context of a disability that is a lifelong struggle. As we learn about what it is like to be short statured and deal with these themes, we in turn learn to better understand ourselves.

Fascinating, moving and entertaining, **short stories** is a must-see journey into the lives and communities of four people you will never forget.

EPISODE NOTES

Episode 1: Amanda's Story

is the moving, epic story of a determined young woman who wants to have a baby in the face of incredible odds;

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Episode 2: Ammie's Story

is the story of a young girl from a broken home who travels overseas for a stage show only to realise what matters is the family she has left behind. But which family?

Episode 3: Rosa's Story

is the story of a woman who marries a Texan she met in an online chat room and must choose between the man she loves and the life she wants for herself and her baby.

Episode 4: Nathan's Story

is the story of two brothers - one short, one tall – who are forced to confront their differences after the sudden death of both their parents.

Directors' Statement

short stories is a series of intense human dramas, full of positive energy, raw emotion and stoic personal resilience in the face of everyday adversity. It adopts an observational approach, interspersed with in situ interviews to provide a

naturalistic real time setting and sense of unfolding story.

The unadorned style and tone of the film reflects the suburban, multicultural, working class setting of the outer western suburbs of Sydney in which our subjects live. Lighting is predominantly natural (with minimal use of reflective lights and key lighting for interviews), lending the characters stories, and their environment, a sense of authenticity.

The camera is primarily hand held to reflect the real time unfolding drama and wherever possible the camera and framing has been lowered to the height of the subjects, 'normalizing' them in terms of our own POV and helping focus on character and story rather than height.

The combined use of a crew shooting on digibeta stock and 'fly on the wall' DV footage help lend the series a sense of 'real time' drama, like a distinctly unique version of **Neighbours** brought to life.

Music was specifically composed for each episode to help provide personality and individual identity to the characters who, despite their marked differences, are often mistaken for each other simply because they are short statured. Unless it forms part of a real time background scene, music is never incidental; it exists exclusively to accentuate a scene, shift a mood or to drive the narrative forward. **Amanda's Story** is underpinned by the use of R&B and hip-hop reflecting its youthful feel, **Ammie's Story** utilises children's music from her stage show, **Rosa's Story** melds Latino rhythms and acoustic blues to reflect the dichotomy between Rosa and her Texan partner, while **Nathan's Story** juxtaposes metal guitar with melancholic harmonium compositions to reflect the story of two very different brothers.

Whilst each character story exists as a stand-alone episode, the directors sought wherever possible to intersperse the characters across different episodes to emphasise the fact that all the stories are drawn from the same community – notably, the short statured basketball community. In many ways, short statured basketball acts as a perfect metaphor for the lives of short statured people.

It is the directors' belief that short statured people are a dynamic group within the community. Yet for most people, short statured people are an oddity. They are seen in circus movies, kids fantasies and comedies like Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and Austin Powers. These roles generally reinforce negative stereotypes of short statured people as objects of comedy, difference and fantasy.

The reality is most people rarely interact with short statured people in a regular, meaningful way. By exploring the trials and tribulations of a group of individuals who happen to be short, this film sets out to demonstrate that short statured

people share the same aspirations, challenges, triumphs and disappointments as the rest of society but in a heightened 'hyper-reality'.

Ultimately, by engaging the audience in the journeys and stories of the individuals the film aims to change or at least broaden the audience's perspective of short statured people. It aims to help the audience understand that they are a unique and important part of a diverse society.

Production Stories & Anecdotes

The seed of **short stories** basketball theme took root in 1989, when co-director Matthew Duffy hitch-hiked around Australia and caught his final ride back to Sydney in a vehicle full of short statured basketballers!

Fast-forward to January 2003, and filmmakers Matthew Duffy and Stuart McCarney were throwing around ideas for a documentary, and the notion of a film about a short statured basketball side rose to the top of the pile. After preliminary research, attendance at a few basketball training sessions and meetings with key members of the short statured community, production for the film commenced.

As the project took on its own life, Duffy and McCarney cut a promotional reel, which highlighted the lives of several of the people with whom they'd been spending time. The warmth and human interest that emanated from this initial trailer caught the interest of SBS Independent (SBSi) who decided to support the series. Following SBS' involvement, the Australian Film Commission (AFC) and NSW Film and Television Office (FTO) also came on-board as investors.

Originally conceived as a behind the scenes look at the NSW short statured basketball side as they journeyed to Adelaide to contest the national titles, the series swiftly evolved into the four character stories that now comprise **short stories**. In fact, **Amanda's Story** began taking shape on the first day's filming...

Identified as the key character in the basketball story, the filmmakers were stunned to discover Amanda standing courtside while her team-mates took the court. Not an ideal start to filming! Amanda told the directors at the time that she was sick... but a few days later the filmmakers discovered she was pregnant, and together they set off on the incredible journey that would set the emotional template for the series.

The speed at which events unfolded during the course of filming meant that all four stories were filmed concurrently over a 24-month period. From a production perspective, this was made possible by the fact that all stories were derived from the same community, so the characters from one story would appear in

scenes the filmmakers were shooting for another story.

The film-makers refer to the lives of their characters as 'hyper intense', a descriptor that reflects the speed and scale of events that occurred in their characters lives:

within the first six months of filming, the NSW basketball side travelled to Adelaide for the interstate basketball championship, Amanda fell pregnant and then lost her baby, both of Nathan's parents died unexpectedly within three months of each other and Rosa gave birth to her first child;

in the following six months, Ammie travelled to Singapore for a children's entertainment show, Rosa headed to Texas to show her husband their child for the first time and Amanda fell pregnant again;

in the following eight months, Nathan decided to run for the Presidency of the NSW chapter of the Short Statured People Of Australia and Amanda successfully gave birth to her first child.

In addition to these stories, the filmmakers were also forced to abandon another story they had been filming for six months after the character withdrew from the project.

short stories marks the directorial debut for Matthew and Stu and their production company, Stu&Duff. The pair are currently in production on a film about Australian cricketing icon Greg Chappell, the beleaguered coach of the Indian cricket team.

short stories was executive produced by acclaimed documentary film-maker Tom Zubrycki and edited by multi-award winning editor, Ray Thomas.

About the Filmmakers

The film's co-directors, writers and producers – Matthew Duffy and Stuart McCarney – have known each other for 20 years, dating back to their days together at school.

Young, fired with enthusiasm and sharing an eclectic background encompassing TV/Internet production, music and entertainment journalism that followed, surprisingly enough, several years of legal studies at Sydney University, Matt & Stu formed their own production company (Stu & Duff Pty. Ltd.) in 2003. **short stories** is their first production.

Since finishing **short stories**, the pair have been busy developing several

projects, including **BILLION DOLLAR MAN**, an hour-length documentary that charts the political intrigue, intense media interest, enormous financial stakes and heart-stopping sporting action that Greg Chappell faced as the coach of cricket's first billion-dollar side – the Indian national team – in their lead-up to the 2007 World Cup.

Matthew Duffy (Writer, Director, Producer)

Filmography

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 2006 – 2007 | Billion Dollar Man (Writer/Director/Producer) (1 hour documentary) |
| 2005 | Short Stories (Writer/Director/Producer) (4 X 26 minute part series) |
| 2003 | Praying for Redemption (Writer /Director/ Producer) (Short Film) |

Biography

- | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------|
| 2002 -2005 | Freelance TVC Producer |
| 2000 - 2001 | Electronic Telegraph (UK) |
| 1998 - 2000 | Fairfax Interactive (Australia) |
| 1996 - 1998 | Internet Producer X/M Harrow |
| 1993 - 1996 | Advertising DMB&B & JWT |

Education / Training

- | | |
|------|---|
| | BA (Hons), LLB (Sydney University) |
| 2003 | 'Producing: Business and the Law' AFTVRS 'Video Production' Metro Screen |
| 2002 | 'Producing' Raindance (UK) |

Stuart McCarney (Writer, Director, Producer)

Filmography

2006 - 2007 Billion Dollar Man (Writer/Director/Producer)
(1 hour documentary)

2005 Short Stories (Writer/Director/Producer)
(4 X 26 minute part series)

2003 - 2005 **Freelance Music / Entertainment Journalist**
Rolling Stone, Juice, Astar, Foxtel, BigPond Music, Big
Day Out, Daily Telegraph, Herald Sun (Melbourne), SLM,
Courier Mail, Oyster, Gold Coast Bulletin, TV HITS
Magazine, B Magazine, Voyeur, Street Press, Noise!, etc

Record Company Consultancy
Sony, BMG, Warner Music, EMI Virgin, Sony BMG
Publicity material (Press Releases, Artist Biographies,
Radio Interview Discs, EPK's)
Media Training (Range of high profile artists)

Freelance TVC Producer

1998 - 2002 TV HITS Magazine (Editor/Deputy Editor/Music Writer)

2001 - 2002 Sunrise (TV Music Reporter)

1998 - 2002 Cheez TV (TV Music Reporter)

1993 - 1995 Band Manager

Education / Training

Dip. Law Barristers & Solicitors Admissions Board (Sydney
University)

Creative Writing Sydney University

Script Writing Robert McKee

Acting Darlinghurst Drama

Tom Zubrycki (Executive Producer)

Tom Zubrycki is an award-winning writer, director and producer of documentaries who has been making films since 1977.

His early documentaries focused on community and trade union subjects including **Waterloo** (1981), **Kemira – Diary of a Strike** and **Friends and Enemies** (1987). Next he collaborated with the Aboriginal community in Broome, W.A., and made two films: **Lord of the Bush** (1989) and **Bran Nue Dae** (1990).

The '90's saw him explore the domestic front; particularly migrant families and the stresses caused by cultural conflict e.g. **Homelands** (1993) and **Bilal** (1996).

His most critically celebrated film has been **The Diplomat** (2000) about the exiled freedom fighter Jose Ramos-Horta, which won two AFI Awards - Best Director and Best Documentary and was shown at over 30 international festivals.

Additional credits include **The Secret Safari** (2001), **Molly & Mobarak** (2003) and **Vietnam Symphony** (2005)

In addition to directing, Zubrycki has worked extensively as a producer mentoring young emerging filmmakers. His credits include **Exile in Sarajevo** (1996, International Emmy) **Stolen Generations** (2000), **Making Venus** (2002) and **Gulpilil – One Red Blood** (2002), **Following the Rabbit Proof Fence** (2002), **Making Venus** (2002) and **The Prodigal Son** (2006).

Ray Thomas (Editor)

Ray Thomas is acknowledged as one of Australia's foremost film editors who specialises in the documentary genre.

For over 20 years he has worked alongside many stalwarts of the industry including Tom Zubrycki (**Vietnam Symphony, Molly & Mobarek, The Diplomat, Bilal, Homelands, Bran Nu Dae, Lord of the Bush**), Robin Anderson and Bob Connolly (**Facing the Music, Rats in the Ranks, Joe Leahy's Neighbours, Black Harvest**), Chris Hilton (**Ice Capped Jungle, The Last Husky, Serpent and the Cross**) and Susan Lambert (**Love and Money, DIY Law, Risky Business, The Gamblers, Under the Hammer, No Sex, No Violence, No TV**).

Thomas' additional credits include **40,000 Barrels** (2002), **Holy Rollers** (2000), **Stress** (2000), **The Post** (1999), **Above the Dust Level** (1999) **Vampire Birds** (1998) and **Little Brother, Little Sister** (1997).

Chris Roles (Camera)

2005 Short Stories (Documentary series)

2002 RPA
Logie award for Best Reality Series, 2002
In the Face of Danger (Documentary)
Against All Odds (Documentary)

Network & Pay TV:

Footy Show, Channel V, Hot Property, Getaway,
Movie Network, Children's Television

1992 – 2001 Network TV:

General Freelance work including three years with
Midday with Kerrie-Anne doing on the road colour
stories including work in Italy, Germany, Ireland,
USA, Papua New Guinea and Australasia.

Lifestyle programs / Sport / Current Affairs /
Corporate

Documentary on Navy Clearance Divers in Batano
Bay - East Timor