



Presents



# BREATH

**A film by**  
Simon Baker

**Starring**  
Simon Baker, Samson Coulter, Ben Spence, Elizabeth Debicki

**Based on the Novel By**  
Tim Winton

**Opens in New York June 1, Los Angeles and select cities June 8**  
**National rollout to follow**

116 minutes – Not Rated

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## **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

BREATH follows two teenage boys, hungry for discovery, in mid-70s coastal Australia, who form an unlikely friendship with an enigmatic man and his wife, who push them to take risks that will have a lasting and profound impact on their lives.

## **OFFICIAL SYNOPSIS**

Based on the award-winning, international best-selling novel by Tim Winton, Simon Baker's directorial debut BREATH follows two teenage boys, Pikelet and Loonie (newcomers Samson Coulter and Ben Spence in breakthrough performances), growing up in a remote corner of the Western Australian coast. Hungry for discovery, the pair form an unlikely friendship with Sando (Simon Baker), a mysterious older surfer and adventurer who pushes the boys to take risks that will have a lasting and profound impact on their lives. Also starring Elizabeth Debicki and Richard Roxburgh, BREATH is an authentic coming-of-age drama set in an idyllic 1970s coastal Australia.

## **LONG SYNOPSIS**

Mid 70's, in a remote corner of the Western Australian coast. Pikelet (Samson Coulter) and Loonie (Ben Spence) stand poised on the edge of young adulthood. The two are constant companions and fellow adventurers, but their home lives and personalities differ in crucial ways.

Mr and Mrs Pike (Richard Roxburgh and Rachael Blake) are solid and dependable — Pikelet is an only child, a thoughtful soul, and the Pike home is a warm yet slightly monotonous sanctuary. Loonie is fiercely competitive and brittle, and lives by his wits. His father Karl Loon (Jacek Koman) is a violent man and Loonie's home life offers no tenderness or protection.

Nevertheless, the boys bond over bikes and daredevil stunts, but their dreams begin to focus on the ocean. Pikelet can only look at it longingly from his father's fishing boat on the river; the journey across the sand bar to the open sea is off limits. For Loonie, the compulsion is what it always is — danger. Snowy Muir drowned out there. This coast is beautiful but brutal.

One day, the pull is too much and the boys cycle outside of their comfort zone down to Sawyer Point. There they encounter the enigmatic Sando (Simon Baker), a former professional surfer, whose effortless grace on the waves and studied detachment on land compels the boys.

Pikelet and Loonie begin to learn to surf, starting out on stubby, Styrofoam boards. As their skills increase, Pikelet shifts emotionally, by degrees, away from his parents. By winter, the pair are fitter and taller, but they still watch Sando from afar. They need to graduate to proper fibreglass boards, earning money doing manual work to afford them. The trick works — the first time they take their new boards out, Sando notices them, offers to store their boards under his house, and the mentorship begins. The challenge quickly becomes to surf Old Smokey, a dangerous break a kilometre out to sea.

Pikelet and Loonie's lives increasingly centre around Sando, his Kombi, his house, and most importantly, his role as guru.

Part of Sando's allure and enigma is that he disappears then reappears, but Eva (Elizabeth Debicki), Sando's enigmatic wife, is always at the house. A former champion freestyle skier from Utah, Eva's career was cut tragically cut short by a knee injury from which she's never recovered physically or emotionally. The feeling of being fully alive by being close to mortal danger was a narcotic for Eva, and it still is for Sando, and increasingly for Loonie.

Sando's forcefulness, Eva's allure, Loonie's competitiveness and the spectre of Old Smokey will all force Pikelet to make crucial decisions — to give in to the expectations of those around him, or to become his own person.

## BACKGROUND TO THE FILM

The journey to the film began with a copy of Tim Winton's book *Breath* being sent to veteran Hollywood producer Mark Johnson's Gran Via Productions in Los Angeles. *Breath* had won Australia's prestigious Miles Franklin award in 2009, but was less known in the United States.

Tom Williams, VP of feature development at Gran Via Productions and the film's executive producer recalls: "The novel was sent to us by an agent whose taste I particularly trust. We share books with each other and say, 'Here's something you have to read, whether or not it could become a film.' *Breath* was sent to us under that guise."

Williams was immediately fascinated and drawn into the world Winton had crafted.

"*Breath* has an emotional depth yet is also a very accessible story, written in a vernacular that is both exotic and familiar. I sent it to Mark Johnson, my boss, and said 'You've got to read this, I think there might be something here.'"

Johnson, a producer on *RAIN MAN*, *THE NOTEBOOK* and the *NARNIA* trilogy, had in the past worked with the Australian actor Simon Baker had worked with Australian actor Simon Baker in the past. When he read the book, he was equally compelled and beyond the Australian connection something intuitively drew Johnson to call Baker, who knew Tim Winton's work but hadn't yet read *Breath*.

"Mark said, 'I'm sending you a copy of the book, this is something that perhaps we could do together,'" recalls Baker. "It had an immediately profound effect on me. Having grown up in a coastal town in Australia, and knowing the characters in the book, I was drawn in. I called Mark immediately on finishing it and said 'Yes'."

Although the book felt in certain ways autobiographical for Baker, it was the universality of Winton's depiction of the defining moment of stepping across the line from childhood to adulthood that he found so moving and accurate.

"What enhanced the connection was that at the time I first read it my two sons were, like Pikelet and Loonie, on the cusp of becoming young teenagers. Kids generally have this incredible unconditional love towards their parents, but there is that moment when your kid looks at you less adoringly and more to try and understand the person you are. I have always been fascinated by stories that capture the unspoken aspects of personal development, the foundations of one's identity."

Mark Johnson contacted Tim Winton about securing the rights to make the film. They planned to meet when Johnson was shooting in Australia, but were never able to be in the same place at the same time.

"In the end, we finally met in Portland, Oregon," says Winton. "I was arriving for a US book tour, but my plane was delayed and Mark was stuck sitting in a diner in Portland for a few hours waiting for me to show up. In the end, it was a great meeting; I was flattered that he was interested and surprised by how intense his interest was. It wasn't just about the exotic for Mark, that it was set in a different hemisphere. He saw that the story was universal. I could tell he was after the heart of the matter and I knew from then that he was going to make the film."

Finding a local Australian producer to collaborate with from early on in the process would be key. In 2009, Mark Johnson was in Australia shooting two films and he called producer Jamie Hilton and invited him on set. After a subsequent meeting with Simon Baker in Sydney, Johnson and Baker invited Hilton to come on board with his production company See Pictures.

"I think the fact that Mark Johnson, such a prolific Hollywood producer, read Tim's novel and decided he wanted to make the movie is testament to the story's universal appeal," says Hilton. "Our lead character pushes boundaries we all face - our mortality, our sexuality - and while the film has exciting spectacle, at its heart it's a very intimate and familiar journey".

"When we first optioned the book, Mark and I met with some really great directors," recalls Baker. "Everyone was interested because of Tim's stature as a writer, but after one particular meeting, Mark leant over and asked me 'has it occurred to you that maybe you should direct this film?' I said, of course it has, but I was never going to be so bold as to put myself forward unless someone recommended me. By asking that question, he more or less recommended me."

"There was no way I would be able to shoot BREATH during a hiatus of THE MENTALIST, because I would only get three months off and this needed a lot more energy than I could give it while I was doing the show. I knew I was only going to be doing seven years of the show, so for the last year and a half I was gearing up to finish THE MENTALIST and then direct BREATH."

Winton would consult with Baker remotely during the initial screenwriting phase.

"I spoke to Simon on the phone a couple of times about script ideas while he was on the set of THE MENTALIST — we would have discussions between takes and then we met a year or so before the shoot began in Perth, and it was a good meeting. We realised that we were on the same page and understood each other instinctively and the work was something in common between us."

For the author, it was an unusual but pleasurable process to go back to the novel to repurpose it as a film.

"I had to re-enter the story and find the parts of the story that you couldn't do without. The rest of it was a feat of compression and elision, moving things around to make them fit. For other books there's so much information that the compression becomes a form of butchery, but for BREATH, it was already there so it was leaving some things out of the suitcase."

For Baker, it was vital that Winton trusted him. Gerard Lee (*Top of the Lake*) came on to work on the screenplay with Baker "Gerard brought a fresh and unencumbered voice to it. We were very lucky to have a screenwriter of his calibre involved," said Baker.

"Tim was incredibly gracious and supportive. He let me play with the material in my own way. I needed to know that he would be okay with that. He said something to me that was very simple but profound; 'When I finish writing a book, it's no longer mine, it belongs to whomever reads it'. That statement is something that will always stick with me."

The challenge of directing as well as acting was an experience not foreign to Baker, as he had directed and acted simultaneously in episodes of THE MENTALIST and THE GUARDIAN.

Of the dual role, Baker says: "It's not easy and would't work for many roles; in this case Sando is a character that I know, and have known for some time. I imagine that gave me some kind of advantage. "

Tom Williams sees two connecting threads through all the film and television projects that Mark Johnson and Gran Via Productions produce — the idea of a family and who we choose to surround ourselves with for better or worse, and the idea of coming of age.

"In NARNIA, there's a family that enters a land which they cannot fathom, and they have to figure out who the good guys are, and who are the bad guys, and rely on their own judgment to do that. BREAKING BAD is about a man who finds himself disillusioned and powerless in his life and makes some bad decisions, and develops a family around him that sits to the side of his biological family."

“BREATH explores the same themes, in a different but very moving way. Coming of age can happen early in life as it does in BREATH, or later in life as it does in BREAKING BAD. Every human being is always evolving. We’re turning the lens on a part of that journey, dramatising it. Whether it’s a big movie or a little movie, we’re trying to say something about life on earth.”

## **CASTING AND CHARACTERS**

BREATH is framed as a coming of age film for Pikelet, charting the forging of his identity, but the ensemble of characters are vital not just as foils to Pikelet's journey, but because each one experiences their own rite of passage.

For Simon Baker, these multiple trajectories are vital. "At what point do you say 'I am an adult'? You can say it all you want, but your actions are what define you. Everyone in the story is going through some sort of crisis of identity."

Of their origins, author Tim Winton says: "The characters are all the kinds of people that I knew as a young man, but they're not based on particular people. I grew up in small communities like the community in the book, and I'm still living in those kinds of places. From before I was in puberty I was meeting these kinds of people, and I'm still meeting them, so I could pick people from any decade of my life and cast them as Sando and Loonie and Pikelet."

### **CASTING**

The film called for a challenging physical element that informed the approach to casting the two young lead roles. The actors would have to be able to surf.

That necessity was something Simon Baker felt comfortable with. "It's probably easier to learn to act than it is to learn to surf," he explains. "I think you just need permission to learn to act."

Baker also wanted to cast non-actors as Loonie and Pikelet because he felt that the raw nature of the characters — two boys living in a remote corner of the world in the 1970s — could be difficult for trained actors to access in an authentic, uncomplicated way.

A national campaign via social media as well as traditional channels commenced, led by casting director Nikki Barrett. The high level of talent involved with BREATH, paired with the fact that the book was widely loved in Australia, led to an enormous response. Casting would take a year.

"I had an expectation of what I wanted to achieve as far as a level of authenticity," Baker explains, "so the bar was high and I knew that casting was going to be complicated and time consuming, and it was."

Baker and Nikki Barrett were moved and impressed by the level of commitment from each of the candidates, who submitted introductory videos.

"It was profoundly energising and motivating to see how many young people were interested in putting themselves out there. Kids would record themselves, or sisters would record their brothers, it was fantastic and we had a massive response. We slowly went through them all and narrowed them down into lists."

Once the two roles were cast, Baker engaged drama coach Nico Lathouris, who he had worked with many years previously, to help in the rehearsal process and give the boys their own strength and foundation.

The dual role of acting and directing the novice performers energised Baker.

"I was right there with them. If I was not in the scene, I was right there directing, and if I was in the scene I was right there acting and directing, so it was a very efficient way to approach things."

From the outset of the six week shoot, Baker determined to set up a relaxed atmosphere on set for the two young leads.

“I didn’t want the boys to feel any tension, any of that uptight rigour that can manifest on a film set,” he explains. “It was very important for me that it was loose and organic. They were so willing and so free that it brought out that joyful excitement out in everyone. These young boys were up for anything, they were phenomenal, and I am so proud of their work.”

Executive producer Tom Williams says of the two young actors: “We got to watch them realise what the craft is about. I remember meeting them for the first time and they were crackling with energy and it was clear that each of them had an element of the character on the page within them. It really was about watching Simon pull that out and shape it into what needed to be there on the screen.”

In the end, Tim Winton, who had first created the characters, had the highest praise for the entire cast. “The casting was masterful for this ensemble piece. Watching them all at work bore out the judgement of the people who made those casting decisions. They found terrific actors.”

### **PIKELET – PORTRAYED BY SAMSON COULTER**

Pikelet has grown up in a loving and safe family environment, but he’s on the cusp of an age where he begins to crave things other than safety and familiarity.

Simon Baker says: “When you’re twelve your horizon is not that wide, but it seems enormous. From that period on, all you do is stretch your horizon out further and further. If you’d asked me when I was fifteen what I wanted to do with my life, I would have said I want to do anything but be the same as my parents. I just wanted to be different. It’s a natural rebellion and one that defines who you are.”

Pikelet is portrayed by newcomer Samson Coulter, who grew up on Manly Beach, just north of Sydney Harbour. Coulter was alerted to casting notices by his parents and by a teacher at his school.

Coulter says: “I had done drama at school, but I’d never really imagined acting in a film. When the part came up, I thought it was interesting because it’s rare that there’s a part where surfing and acting merge together, so it appealed to me straight away.”

As fate would have it, Coulter had read *Blueback* by Tim Winton and was just about to read the author’s 2015 memoir, *Island Home*.

Coulter sent in an initial audition video. An audition and call backs followed, and finally a workshop with Simon Baker, Nikki Barrett and a few other shortlisted boys. After the workshop there was a time gap and Coulter almost forgot about the film in the maelstrom of schoolwork and surfing.

“In the summer holidays we were up north, out of Sydney, and mum tricked me and said that she’d got a call from the casting people and said in a sad voice, ‘I spoke to the BREATH people...’ and I thought, I probably didn’t get the part. Then she said, ‘You got Pikelet!’ I couldn’t believe it. Simon called me that afternoon to congratulate me.”

The lure of the water that draws Pikelet was something Coulter had felt himself — his surfing prowess would prove not only a technical advantage but an emotional advantage for playing then role.

“I’ve been a surfer for ever, for as long as I can remember,” explains Coulter. “Pikelet is a complex character and has a deep love for the ocean.”

As the shoot commenced, Coulter had to acclimatise to the colder waters of the south coast of Western Australia. He developed a routine of surfing with Ben Spence, who played Loonie, when not shooting,

which would help the boys to bond and refine their acting skills helped the boys bond more closely and refined their acting skills.

“Simon often said to me on set, ‘Just don’t act’, which is a funny one because you're acting and he was telling me to stop acting. I had to think about that for a while, to listen to what was underneath those words.”

By the end of BREATH, Pikelet’s future seems assured, at least in terms of the person he will become. His story is learning that courage is more than physical bravery, that it’s embracing who you are and taking responsibility for your life.

Executive producer Tom Williams says: “Simon talked about BREATH as a film in which the hero does the heroic thing by not slaying the dragon. Sometimes the courageous thing is to walk away from a fight. In this movie it is a victory that he is able to stand on his two feet. Pikelet is a character who’s going to be solid.”

### **LOONIE – PORTRAYED BY BEN SPENCE**

In Pikelet and Loonie, Tim Winton imagined two characters that were very different but drawn to each other for specific reasons.

“Pikelet's a careful boy — he's considered, responsible and what attracts him to Loonie is wildness. Loonie is a damaged boy; he's ungovernable and completely unable and unwilling to be contained by social proprieties, by any kind of limits. He’s this wild spark who introduces Pikelet to a more adventurous way of being in the world.”

Pikelet sees that Loonie’s vibrancy is also self-destructive, driven by his dire family circumstances. Loonie will do anything because he doesn't care if he lives or dies; Pikelet comes to realise that life is sacred.

Simon Baker feels “enormous empathy for Loonie, because I had many friends who were like him. There were times that I was like him, so I understand exactly where Loonie is coming from. He wants to, like all kids do, know that he has somewhere to belong and that he’s of value in some way. He wants to know that someone cares about him and that someone feels for who he is. Loonie is trying to figure out who he is, but has a totally different set of circumstances to Pikelet.”

Loonie is portrayed by Ben Spence, who at the time of filming was a 15 year-old surfer from the Margaret River region of Western Australia.

“I first heard about the film when Surfing Australia sent out a call about a film that was looking for a surfer kid to be in it,” recalls Spence. “My Mum sent in a photo to Nikki Barrett and I auditioned for her. After that, I got sent to Sydney for a workshop with Simon Baker and then I got the job.”

Of the comparisons between actor and character, Spence feels that “Loonie is a daredevil who wants to do everything at 100%. Loonie’s life is similar to mine in terms of wanting to surf, doing pranks, but he’s different in that he’s reckless to the point that he’d kill himself doing something to show off.”

Of the acting experience, Spence says: “It was weird at the start, getting makeup and that sort of thing, but it was cool getting a buffet every morning. It was interesting, tiring and hard work, but it was fun and worth it. Simon calls it ‘professional bullshitting,’ you pretend, but you put yourself in that situation, you believe that you are the character. When I had the first scene out of the way I felt pretty comfortable.”

Spence executed his own stunt of riding a bike and grabbing hold of a utility vehicle. “I wouldn’t call it a stunt. Well, it probably is for the movie, but I felt pretty comfortable because there was a pole there as well. I do that stuff at home, so it was fairly simple.”

Spence and Coulter drew from their common experiences working with each other —surfing and being first time actors.

“Because I was with Samson in workshops and then as we started the shoot, I was comfortable with him,” says Spence. “He’s a funny kid, similar to my friends at home so pretty cool to hang.”

Coulter sees Spence as “a legend. It was good to be with someone who is in the same situation, who hadn’t acted before, because you’re both asking the same questions and wondering the same things. He was great to be around, he loves a laugh and he’s the perfect Loonie, I reckon.”

### **SANDO – PORTRAYED BY SIMON BAKER**

Sando has experienced great accolades in the world of international competitive surfing, but is now living off the grid with his elusive wife, Eva, in a remote coastal house. Pikelet and Loonie are drawn to his golden hued aura, and he, at first noncommittally, adopts a role as mentor to the boys.

Of the pull that Pikelet feels for Sando, Simon Baker, who portrays him, says: “Mr and Mrs Pike have one child and that child is pulling away from them, wanting to become his own person. The Pike household is restrained, respectful, and there is a contrasting dynamic at Sando’s house. They actually yell at each other and have arguments and smoke pot and do all these exciting things.”

Pikelet is at first seduced by the possibilities of freedom and self-expression that Sando’s world evokes, but as he grows up, the perspective of the film towards Sando matures, revealing the fissures and the cracks in his world.

Baker seemed fated to play the role; when Tim Winton met with Simon Baker, the author said: “You were the guy I had in my head to play Sando.”

“Sando is someone who’s attractive to these boys because he’s got a mystical warrior persona that they can’t get enough of,” says Winton. “Sando is a skilled and thoughtful person, but he’s trapped in his own boyhood, he hasn’t been able to relinquish his own golden youth. He’s extending his youth through Loonie and Pikelet.”

As the film’s journey plays out, it becomes evident that Sando is getting more out of the relationship than Pikelet is.

“Pikelet, and Loonie, get out of him what they can and eventually they see through him,” Winton continues. “I see Sando as a kind of a tragic figure really. An interesting man but a guy who settled for a version of himself and he’s not brave enough to make another step into a different phase of his life.”

### **EVA – PORTRAYED BY ELIZABETH DEBICKI**

Eva, Sando’s wife, is a former competitive skier whose career was cut short by a traumatic and debilitating knee injury, from which she still suffers pain and reduced mobility.

Sando and Eva live in a microcosm in which Sando is still living a dimly lit version of his dream, but Eva’s identity has been violently wrenched from her. The two were drawn together by the mutual love of the

rush of adrenalin, by the power of risk, which is something she can no longer experience. The core of their relationship has been fractured. Sando, her only connection to the outside world, is increasingly distracted by his two acolytes.

Eva is portrayed by young Australian actress Elizabeth Debicki, who was drawn to the role itself, as well as to the source material. She was the final actor cast.

“Eva is American, so we’d been looking in that direction,” says producer Jamie Hilton. “Three weeks before the shoot began, I was talking to Elizabeth’s agent about another film and her agent said, ‘Have you thought about Elizabeth?’ and I said, ‘Let me talk to Simon about her.’”

Baker said “Elizabeth Debicki carries herself with great poise. She has emotional and intellectual confidence. I felt the idea of seeing someone so capable struggle with Eva’s circumstances would be dramatically interesting.”

“I was fascinated by Eva,” Debicki explains. “She’s a complex amalgamation of pain and frustration. She’s warm and loving but she’s struggling profoundly because her identity was so wrapped up in her profession as an athlete. She’s like a caged animal; she’s incredibly vulnerable because she doesn’t have control over her life anymore. She’s at the mercy of Sando and his life decisions.”

Eva’s boredom and her desire to have some agency in her own life leads to a dark journey for Pikelet, who is bewitched by her.

“I was intrigued by the relationship with Pikelet and what that means and why she enters into it,” says Debicki. “There are a lot of unanswered questions about Eva and that’s why I loved her.”

The way that Sando and Eva live evokes the social movement of the time of ‘living off the grid’. The truth of the character struck Terri Lamera, the film’s costume designer, who had lived in coastal Western Australia during the seventies, and was connected to the types of people the film portrays.

“For surfers, life is about surfing,” Lamera explains. “If you want to come along for the ride, come along for the ride. For a while, I remember feeling comforted and comfortable in that lifestyle because there were so few expectations. The reality of living without electricity and lighting a fire when you want anything heated, going out into the forest to have a shower when it’s freezing cold, is not as romantic as it seems. I know a lot of women who bathed their children in the sink because they didn’t have a bath, and lived in a shed because the house that was being built never got finished, it was a repetitive story. Added to that, the isolation of living in those places by yourself when the guy’s away surfing for who knows how long – a lot of those relationships fell to pieces.”

Baker says, “Elizabeth has a rigorous approach to her work, she works very hard and she takes it very seriously. It took her a day or so to understand the tone on set, that it was safe to take risks. She did a wonderful job in one of the most difficult roles in the film.”

#### **MR PIKE – PORTRAYED BY RICHARD ROXBURGH**

Australian actor Richard Roxburgh, who plays Pikelet’s father, has a long connection to Tim Winton’s work.

The actor explains: “I read *That Eye, The Sky* in the early 1990s and thought it would make a fantastic piece of theatre. So, a mate and I created a piece for the theatre company that we had then. It was a very special time, and Tim’s work translates uniquely and incredibly well to the stage.”

In more recent years, Roxburgh was engaged to read the novel *Breath* as a talking book for the BBC, as well as acting in many screen adaptations of Winton's work.

"I love the 'frequent flyer' points that I have in the world of Tim Winton," says Roxburgh. "There may not be any other actors who've done more Winton work. BREATH is my third Tim Winton film, so that's getting up there, I should get points."

Roxburgh and Simon Baker knew each other distantly when the actor was approached about the film and the role.

"I was attracted to working with Simon because I've always thought he was a lovely bloke, a terrific actor and I thought he would work really well with the young actors playing Pikelet and Loonie. Simon is a very subtle actor and you needed somebody who could work very delicately with the boys in those roles."

Mr Pike is a tinkerer, a potterer — a man who spends most of his spare time in his shed fixing things, as Roxburgh's own father had. Not just the character, but also the context evoked strong feelings for Roxburgh.

"There was a great beauty and nostalgia for me in the film. I walked into the Pike family house created for the film and it was incredibly moving. There were print patterns in the lounge room that I hadn't seen since I was a boy — our house was infested with them because we were not hugely well off. The paraphernalia of the seventies within the film, that's where I grew up."

Roxburgh sees Winton as a writer who speaks in a very particular way to Australians.

"He rings a bell, certainly with my childhood and translates it beautifully to the page. His themes occupy a special place in the Australian imagination because he talks beautifully about landscape, about water, and about this strange place that we occupy in the landscape, pasted around the periphery of it."

### **MRS PIKE – PORTRAYED BY RACHAEL BLAKE**

When actress Rachael Blake was Pikelet's age, she'd just moved to Australia from England with her family.

"I was in a completely alien environment, it was hot at Christmas which was bizarre, and I was the posh girl at school. I was relentlessly teased. I was a bit lost and incredibly shy. We used to have a joke in the family that I used to 'hide behind the couch' when anyone visited — an invisible couch that I used to drag out in conversations and hide behind."

Blake was living in London when she first encountered *Breath*. An Australian friend who had been a houseguest left her the recently released hardback as a leaving gift.

"It was beautiful because reading it was a little slice of Australia under the grey London skies. The way Tim Winton writes has an elegance to it, and I don't mean stylistically, I mean a mathematical elegance. He tells a story in the simplest possible form, there are no complications to his writing. I find it incredibly accessible and visual."

Blake sees Mrs Pike as a warm, supportive parent who doesn't quite know what her child is going through, but who allows Pikelet's rebellion to happen while supporting him.

"I think it's an incredibly evolved thing to do. She's watching her son push away from her but it's not a war, it's something that she allows to happen. It's unconditional love. In the book, Winton describes the

relationship as tenderness without intimacy. I can see that, because one hand is pushing away and the other hand is holding on, but it's also a very sweet inclusive way of being that they have with each other."

For Blake, the particularity of the setting has a relevance to the way the relationship between mother and son plays out in BREATH.

"Perhaps back in the seventies these were problems that we solved ourselves, whereas now Mrs Pike might be online looking for pointers about how to talk to her son, she might have found a therapist, she might be on a Facebook group for wayward kids, there'd be more infrastructure around it. In this information drenched world, I can't imagine that the microcosm they've created that exists only around them would be there."

Mr and Mrs Pike have a long established relationship, to the point where they don't directly speak to each other through the course of the script. Rather, they communicate to each other through their child. Working together for Blake and Richard Roxburgh was not a new experience for the two actors, nor was playing a married couple.

"Rachael and I played Bob and Hazel Hawke together in one incarnation," recalls Roxburgh. "She was also recently in my show RAKE. It's always great working with her, she's a natural, she's terrific."

For Blake: "I love that Richard and I take the work seriously but we don't take ourselves seriously. When Rox is on, he's completely on, and then when we're off set we can laugh and relax. I adore working with him."

The production design of the Pike's house, as it did for Roxburgh, evoked strong memories for Blake.

"It's that tenderness of the seventies. The beach, the denim shorts, the waves. Summer came into your house then. There was no air conditioning, no mobile phones. If you wanted a note, you had to write it. There was an immediacy that life forced you to have."

## **THE PRODUCTION**

### **FINDING THE LOCATIONS**

Despite the universality of the book's themes, the specificity of the landscape would be vital to creating the visual and emotional world of the film. For Tim Winton, the south coast of Western Australia has a significant impact on his work — most of his books and short stories are set in or touch on this region.

"I think it's the strangest, most enigmatic and beautiful part of the world," he says. "I went there as an exile at 12 years old and hated it, partly because it was always raining, but when I left I felt that it had got under my skin and it was part of me forever."

In *BREATH*, the landscape shapes the characters - their behaviour and aspirations are strongly influenced by the particular personality of the environment.

"Australians are like that, I think more than many places," Winton continues. "We're the product of our geography. So in the sense that the film shows how overpowering the landscape and the coast is, that makes it quintessentially West Australian."

Despite this, Winton himself initially encouraged Simon and Mark to make the film elsewhere.

"I suggested that they could make the film in California and it would be fine by me, but Simon and Mark were very keen to make it in Western Australia. To be honest, I was a little anxious, it was like the world was going to come to my little secret place, but I knew deep down that it was the right place to make it. Their instincts were right. I was being selfish, I was dressing it up as altruism that I didn't want to disturb the local community, but really I just didn't want to share the secret."

During the writing process, Baker conducted location research, flying to Perth, driving down to Albany and then back up to Perth along the coast, looking for the perfect place that felt like it had the various aspects that were necessary for the way in which he wanted to tell the story.

The director explains: "In *BREATH*, the beach and the coastline are important, as is the coastline in relation to the town and what the town represents. Even though you don't get to see the town much in the film, you get a good sense of the journey from the town to the coast and the estuary, and how the estuary connects to Pikelet's life. All those things are intrinsic to the way the story stacks up emotion."

Finding this ideal location was, in the end, fortuitous and speedy.

"At the end of the first day, we arrived at a little town called Denmark," recalls Baker. "We drove towards the beach, it was around 4pm and the light was gorgeous. We went up to a lookout and from there we could see the sweep of Ocean Beach and the Nullaki Peninsula lit up in the distance. It looked so majestic but also inviting and nurturing. The beach wasn't very developed, and incredibly rugged, and I thought this is geographically exactly what the town feels like to me in the book."

"I said to the location manager and to Jamie Hilton, 'This is the place'. We took photographs then, and many are very similar to shots in the film. I have a photograph of the back of the Pike house that we used in Denmark; it was the first house we went to. We looked at other houses and went through a whole process but ended up coming back to that house."

When the team returned to Perth, that Denmark was the ideal location was in part endorsed by Tim Winton himself.

“Tim asked if I’d found anywhere I wanted to film,” Baker continues. “When I mentioned Denmark, he said ‘Oh, that’s interesting’ and left it at that. Legend has it, there is a house in Denmark that he lived in when he wrote the book, something which Tim has neither confirmed nor denied.”

With the help of government film funding agencies Screen Australia and ScreenWest, and government economic and social development agency Great Southern Development Commission, filming in and around Denmark became feasible, in terms of budget and logistics.

Executive producer Tom Williams says: “The dream had been to film BREATH in Western Australia. We thought we’d probably have to shoot it somewhere else but when it became a reality, it really excited us. We were incredibly well supported by Screen Australia, ScreenWest and the Great Southern Development Commission. They gave us not only the financial support but also incredible advice. They recommended the best window of time to shoot the film in, in terms of ideal weather conditions, and they supported every decision that we made. It was a very harmonious relationship.”

Winton’s hesitations about the local community being disturbed were in the end not necessary. The production would be a positive for the area, employing locals in a variety of roles and injecting money into the community.

## **PRODUCTION DESIGN**

Production designer Stephen Jones-Evans had read *Breath* before being sent the script and was familiar with Winton’s work.

“What really attracted me to the project was the fact that I was Pikelet’s age in 1975 and I lived through the world depicted in the book and the film,” says Jones-Evans. “My brother was a huge surfer in the early 1970s — though I wasn’t a surfer myself, I understood that culture.”

Jones-Evans was also drawn to Baker’s profound connection to the story. “Because this story is really about Simon’s upbringing as well, when we discussed the approach in the initial stages, we were always talking about it from a place of authenticity. You felt that Simon had lived this.”

The first parameters of the production design that Baker and Jones-Evans set was that they didn’t want overtly iconic images from the 1970s. They eschewed a drippy seventies period approach in favour of a stripped back aesthetic.

“Because the 1970s has been treated so iconically in a number of films, we wanted to go back to a monochromatic, raw, unfiltered look at the period,” explains Jones-Evans. “We looked at a lot of references, particularly the work of John Witzig who was one of the major Australian surf photographers of the period. His pictures became a kind of a bible on which we based our images.”

Baker and Jones-Evans went to great lengths to ensure authenticity. Sando and Eva’s house, the place where Pikelet and Loonie increasingly spend their time on land, would eventually be made from the ground up when the right house couldn’t be found as an existing structure.

“The sort of house we needed was very common when I was a kid on the North Coast of New South Wales,” says Baker. “I had this romantic notion that those houses still existed and they do to a degree, but there was a certain point when those living an alternate lifestyle discovered power tools and a lot of the finishes started to change. They aren’t as handmade anymore.”

The team looked at 45 houses built in the 1970s, but many had been partially modernised or had gardens that were too well established. Sando’s house is a place in which many different storylines meet and

required specific physical elements to enable these intersections to take place. To be able to connect the inside to the outside, Jones-Evans and his team used a great deal of glass and took advantage of reflections to bring nature into each frame.

The overall impact impressed Baker. "It was exactly how I'd imagined it. Stephen did a wonderful job. When you look at the house onscreen, you can feel what it would be like to rub your hand on the walls, you can smell what it's like to be in the house. Stephen's attention to detail is so precise that those senses are triggered."

As part of the producers' emphasis on employing local talent, the house was constructed by a builder from the Denmark region. Other local professionals provided innovative solutions that worked within the film's budget.

"We had a number of scenes that called for rain," says Jones Evans, "but we couldn't afford to bring a special effects technician plus all their equipment from the eastern states. We found an irrigation specialist called Simon Shepard, gave him a budget and he bought plumbing pipe and hoses, did a number of tests and, with few adjustments, he created two fantastic water towers that created our rain." One of the first people Jones-Evans employed in the Art Department was Jodie Cooper, a former pro-surfer, who was engaged to supervise the construction of the surfing paraphernalia, which, again, needed to be completely authentic to the period.

"Jodie had worked in the Art Department on a number of other films that I'd worked on, so I knew I needed to get her on board, because it required that level of authenticity. Because surfing was such a big part of Simon's upbringing, I knew he'd be very detail focused on those aspects of the design. Jodie is from the part of Western Australia we were filming in, she knew all the surf spots and knew the characters. I got her on early to start researching and making all the boards."

Ben Spence, who portrays Loonie, was struck by the differences between the film's boards to those he uses today. "The surfboards were different in a lot of ways, they had a single fin, they hadn't discovered the thruster, and they were a lot thicker and longer. They were very different to ride in the film, harder to turn and harder to speed on."

A key part of Jones-Evans' set was the landscape, so crucial to Winton's world which plays a crucial part in Winton's world.

"The region we filmed in has some of the best coastline I've seen in Australia and was reflective of how we treated the period," he explains. "It feels very raw, and has this beautiful flaw in the way that the peppermint scrub rolls down to meet the white sand, which meets the aqua blue sea. You've got nothing in front of you except the Antarctic, so you've got those wild southern oceans pushing in on this incredible landscape."

#### **COSTUME DESIGN and HAIR AND MAKEUP**

Costume designer Terri Lamera was no stranger to film and television adaptations of Tim Winton's books, having worked on the mini-series adaptation of CLOUDSTREET in 2011. Lamera felt particularly drawn to BREATH, because she'd lived in Western Australia in the 1970s, emulating a similar lifestyle to that of Sando and Eva.

"A lot of the guys that I hung out with surfed," she recalls, "a lot of people were building their own houses out in the bush, trying to find a better, non-materialistic lifestyle. I knew a lot of Sandos, and I think there are still a lot of Sandos hiding in the hills behind Denmark, which is one of the things that gives the place its charm."

Lamera compiled a vision book of costume concepts and designs, which combined John Witzig's photographs along with personal photographs taken by Lamera and friends, some of whom still live that lifestyle. As with the production design, Baker and Lamera's aim was to pare back, to keep the costumes as simple and authentic as possible, and to integrate them with and take inspiration from the environment.

"Simon, Steven Jones-Evans and I created a palette that drew on Denmark's unique colours, which are quite different to the rest of Western Australia. We dyed a lot of the clothing and aged the pieces, to create realism. Simon was keen for us to use a lot of texture in the clothing so we produced a lot of beautiful hand knits. We had a local lady who knitted some beanies for Loonie and we sourced antique hand spun wools from Melbourne that we knitted into jumpers."

Pikelet and Loonie are kids in the early scenes of BREATH, so Lamera dressed them in generic old-fashioned swim shorts and T-shirts, dyed to the colours of their surroundings, and in Plimsolls. When the pair begin to use proper boards, their look begins to imitate Sando's.

Of Sando's costuming, Lamera says: "Simon is a surfer and he grew up a surfer so he looks like he belongs in what we dressed him in, and in fact one of the things he wears in the film is a jumper that his mum knitted for him, which looks totally right for the period."

Lamera worked closely with hair and makeup designer Shane Thomas, who she'd last worked together with years earlier.

"I hadn't read the book when I was contacted by Simon to meet him and talk about the project," Thomas remembers. "Once we started chatting and I could see how excited he was, and how interesting the subject was, I was on board. What excited me were the intricacies of aging these two boys, from 13 to 16, without making it look hokey or contrived, but creating a free flowing coming of age."

For Loonie and Pikelet, Thomas referenced various photographs from the period, in which young surfers had often cut their fringes off so that their hair didn't fall in their eyes when they surfed. He had the added challenge of aging the two young actors.

"I thought that the best way to approach it overall would be through skin tone and slightly changing their hair length and colours," Thomas says. "When they're younger, they haven't been as exposed to the sun so I kept them paler. As they grow up, they're more exposed to the sun, so I gradually darkened their skin tones."

"I did a trick with Loonie where I gave him a fringe and underneath that fringe there's a shorter fringe. For scenes where he was younger I pushed those bits to the side so you'd see a shorter fringe, and then when he's older I brought it heavier at the front."

For Elizabeth Debicki, playing Eva, Thomas says: "The imagery that kept coming up was Joni Mitchell and I thought that was a really good way to go. Joni Mitchell was the perfect iconic seventies woman, and beautiful, as Elizabeth is, so that's where we started in terms of hairstyle, length and colour for Eva."

Of the interplay between the two departments, Lamera says: "There's no point in creating a costume that looks authentic if the hair and makeup aren't authentic, you've wasted your time. It was such a joy to work with Shane and see it all come together. I brought Shane into the costume area to show him what I was doing; we went through Witzig's work together and looked at different haircuts from the period. From the moment the two boys went into Shane's trailer and came out with their haircuts, it completely changed the look and had a huge impact."

Both Lamera and Thomas felt, for different reasons, powerfully moved by how working on this story interplayed with their own experiences as young people.

“I was in tears many times on this job,” Lamera confesses, “at how real it felt to me and how much it reminded me of times when I was young, when everything was full of promise and life was simple.”

“I can relate because there was a lot of angst for me when I was 15,” says Thomas. “I grew up in the country, and I didn’t know what a gay person was when I started feeling things. I think there’s a correlation with Pikelet. Pikelet’s decisions end up becoming ethical and moral, he’s really thoughtful about his decisions. Don’t feel pressured to do something that you don’t really want to do if you think it is right. The decisions he has to make are so mature for a 16 year old. It’s really beautiful.”

A photo of himself as an eight year old became Thomas’ inspiration for Pikelet’s hair.

“When we were trying to work out what to do with Samson’s hair, I found a photo of me as a kid in my iPad case — I’m not sure why it was in there — and I said ‘I think I just found the solution.’ During the shoot, the photo was stuck on my mirror as a reference for the character’s hair, but also to look into my eyes as an eight year old and feel those feelings of being indestructible, before you’re conditioned by adults and by society.”

## **THE SHOOT**

Filming in Western Australia was ideal for Simon Baker and the other producers, not just in terms of authenticity to Winton’s setting, but to keep integrity in deeper ways.

“One of the things that we talked about from the beginning with BREATH is that this be made as Australian as possible,” explains EP Tom Williams. “We didn’t want the fingerprints of Hollywood on this movie so we always had, in our minds, designed this to be an Australian film.”

Australian producer Jamie Hilton knew that the team could take advantage of the particular incentives offered by the state, including a recently announced \$16 million Western Australian Regional Film Fund, as well as the experience and skill of local crews.

"When people think of Western Australia, they think of mining or a giant desert. Not many people know that they have one of the best funded and supportive screen agencies in the country, and as a result much of Australia's film production happens there. The crew are hardworking, experienced and have great equipment, and the locations are very diverse and underexposed. Our company produced three films in WA in 2016/2017, a futuristic sci-fi, a Perth set drama and BREATH, which showcases the spectacular Great Southern region and its dramatic coastline. I'm sure WA's new regional film fund will generate further production and give more communities the experience of having a film come to town".

The film presented a specific challenge that has long faced filmmakers — shooting in the water.

“Mother Nature controls so much when you are shooting a film on dry land, but as soon as you get out into the ocean every problem is magnified one thousand fold,” says Simon Baker. “You can’t employ the same range of equipment you can use on land, it’s hard to communicate on the water, you have more complex safety issues and many factors can change in a matter of seconds.”

The producers assembled a highly experienced water camera department which was small in number, to allow nimbleness.

Rick Rifici, who would shoot all the surfing scenes as well as the underwater scenes, brought with him the added benefits of originating from Western Australia. Rifici had filmed a wide range of surfing scenes, for TV commercials as well as drama.

“With my job, I’ve been lucky enough to travel the world,” Rifici explains. “I normally hit the road for six to nine months a year. Depending on the weather conditions, we travel from Fiji to Tahiti to Hawaii then Western Australia. We follow the sun, or follow the swell rather.”

Whereas the main unit director of photography on land, or on a boat, has a support crew, Rifici was often alone, even for the dialogue scenes.

“I’m usually a one-man band once I hit the water, dealing with technical aspects of the camera and gear, dealing with Mother Nature in some awkward positions at times. The surfing scenes on BREATH were mostly smooth, and we had a really good safety team. We filmed some point of view shots from the tinny one day, with Simon and Samson, and experienced what’s called a ghost bommie where we suddenly went over quite a large wave, but the skipper handled it extremely well, everyone was safe. Everybody was highly experienced in what they were doing.”

Baker’s decision to cast boys who could already surf, as well as his own surfing prowess, greatly benefited Rifici’s job.

“Normally I have to deal with actors that can’t surf. Trying to ‘sell’ that they’re surfers, even if it’s just paddling, let alone getting to their feet or catching a wave, is really hard, whereas Simon is a really good surfer and both the boys are really good water men, so it made everything authentic.”

Baker was impressed with the team, and was deeply thankful for and awed with the final results.

“We had a great team. At times it rained and the winds turned onshore and we had storms that battered us, but it was all in or nothing and in the end, we got really lucky, so lucky. When I look at the film now I still pinch myself and cannot believe that we were able to get what we needed to get to tell the story.”

## **THE FINISHED PRODUCT**

Editing BREATH was a significant undertaking, given the amount of not just on water footage, but additional land footage that Baker captured.

“I have always had a deep respect for editors, but I have a particularly enormous respect for Dany Cooper, who edited BREATH, for her attention to detail as well as her compassion. She understood, during the process, that the story was very personal for me.”

“The mood while we were editing was incredibly collaborative and extremely focused,” says Cooper. “Simon is a remarkable director. He was intent at all times on telling the story in the most nuanced way possible and to create a film that felt very real. His enthusiasm and love of the project was infectious.”

The most striking challenge for Cooper while editing BREATH was the water material.

“Choosing the right pieces to tell the story was paramount. As I had not really surfed, I relied on Simon to tell me what was ‘good’ surfing as opposed to ‘not so good’. Some days we would spend a day assessing a single set of waves. We would line them up in rows, work out which was the best wave for that particular moment in the story, then start the work of making sure it fitted into the scene. The waves were shot on a Red camera at 6k resolution, so we could create frames out of frames, which was a great benefit.”

The film's composer, Harry Gregson-Williams, is best known for large scale Hollywood films like the SHREK franchise, X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE, and THE MARTIAN. Gregson-Williams joined the film's team on seeing an early edit of the film, drawn to the performances and to Baker's handling of the material.

"I was struck by the subtle performances Simon was able to capture from the two young boys playing Pikelet and Loonie. Simon, as a director and an actor, is masterfully connected to the story and its intricacies, and it was his welcoming collaborative approach that made me take a head-first dive into the film."

Baker wanted to ensure that Gregson-Williams' music communicated a sense of subtlety, space and breath. Because the film takes place in the 1970s, Gregson-Williams' score became primarily guitar-driven, and the harmonic structure and style were influenced by the music of the era.

Of working on an intimate, small-scaled film like BREATH, Gregson-Williams says: "I had to be careful not to 'over-score' certain moments, as many of the emotional beats and relationships were so delicately acted and crafted. In that sense, it was actually much more challenging writing the score for BREATH, because as a composer you can't rely on your compositional instincts or fall back on certain tricks you've acquired. There's no hiding or masking anything in such an exposed and raw film like this. It was a refreshing and challenging process, which I truly enjoyed."

At the end of the process, the producers were aware of the uniqueness of the film they had been able to craft.

"It's rare that you have the opportunity to make a picture like this," admits Jamie Hilton. "Cultural funding for the arts allows us to tell our own stories and Tim Winton articulates the Australian experience in such a beautiful and unique way. It was a real privilege to work with Simon and Mark to bring BREATH to the screen at the scale which the story demanded. Australian audiences and filmmakers are fortunate to have screen agencies, distributors and cinemas that are supportive of local stories and talent."

## **WORKING WITH SIMON BAKER**

Samson Coulter: "Simon taught me everything I know. It was amazing to see someone handle the pressure of making a film like he did. It was awesome to see someone who was so in love with the story that he was telling."

Tim Winton: "I couldn't think of anyone better to direct BREATH. It was a brave thing for him to do and I think it's great to see someone extend themselves as an artist. I'm happy that he's having his feature directing debut with one of my books, it's a privilege."

Tom Williams: "Simon has an incredible creative mind and it's been in acting that most people have experienced that, but he's proven himself with BREATH. He directed, he wrote, he was a fantastic producer, he wore so many hats. His understanding and his ability to realise this vision is really uncommon."

Jamie Hilton: "Simon is very specific, very direct. What makes him so strong as a director is that he's a fantastic communicator. He speaks to people in their language and has a great universal understanding of filmmaking because he's grown up on sets. If Simon's directing career burgeons - if he's the director that I believe that he is - he'll go on to have a big future. It's been really exciting to be a part of the beginning of that."

Elizabeth Debicki: "Simon was very passionate about BREATH. He directed it from his heart. Every choice was made with precision and trying to access the truth of the moment for each character. He directs with a lot of detail and specificity and I loved working with him because of that."

Shane Thomas: "Simon Baker has a very calm energy to be around. He's a great director, amazing with the cast, with the young boys who had never acted before he guided them expertly. The casting was flawless and he did a really good job with crew. He assembled an incredible team of creatives."

Terri Lamera: "Simon is such a warm and beautiful human being. He has a really strong vision, a clear picture of how he wants things to be. He's incredibly visual and has a fantastic eye for beauty."

Richard Roxburgh: "From the first phone conversation I had with Simon, I could tell that he was completely embedded in this story. He's incredibly passionate and sweats every single tiny detail. He has an ease with actors, because that's the territory that he comes from, and he's such a good guy."

Rachael Blake: "Simon has an incredible passion for this story. What was interesting for me was working with an actor who's now directing, it was interesting getting inside his world, which was very simple, very pared back. He was always trying to get away from any sort of artifice."

#### **WORKING WITH SAMSON AND BEN**

Elizabeth Debicki: "Samson and Ben are gorgeous, annoyingly wonderful actors and are so natural. It's unfair that they can surf so well and act so well. They seemed born to be in these roles, I loved watching them work."

Richard Roxburgh: "Samson and Ben are really pretty special. It was extraordinary how relaxed they were acting on film, having never done it before. The natural ease that they had was fantastic. They both managed to occupy that territory really beautifully."

Rachael Blake: "Ben is kind of twitchy, he's got a great quality I hadn't seen before and Samson has a very soft quality to him. It was like working with sponges, they were learning on the go. As a trained actor, they forced me to be very honest because they don't know how to lie yet, whereas as professional actors we lie all the time. On set when you're telling the truth, you're lying in some respects. This will be the first of many films, I would say, to come for both of them."

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

### **SIMON BAKER – Director, Producer, Writer and ‘Sando’**

Simon Baker is a Golden Globe®, Emmy® and Screen Actors Guild-nominated actor and director, honoured with Best Actor nominations for the TV series’ THE MENTALIST and THE GUARDIAN. He most recently completed production on his feature film directorial debut BREATH, based on Tim Winton’s iconic novel. As well as directing, Simon also produced, co-wrote and starred alongside Elizabeth Debicki and Richard Roxburgh.

First garnering international attention when he starred in the Academy Award®-winning film L.A. CONFIDENTIAL, Simon has developed a varied oeuvre throughout his career. Notable films he has starred in include Michael Winterbottom’s thriller noir THE KILLER INSIDE ME, opposite Casey Affleck and Kate Hudson; Ang Lee’s critically acclaimed RIDE WITH THE DEVIL; lauded box office success THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA, opposite Meryl Streep and Anne Hathaway; and the Academy Award® nominated and multiple independent award-winning feature MARGIN CALL, with Kevin Spacey, Stanley Tucci, Jeremy Irons, Demi Moore and Zachary Quinto.

From 2001-2004, Simon starred in the TV series THE GUARDIAN, for which he received a Golden Globe nomination for Best Actor in a Drama Series. In 2008, he began his role as the lead in the critically successful international hit THE MENTALIST. His nominations for this included Outstanding Lead Actor at the 2009 Primetime Emmy Awards, Best Performance by an Actor at the 2010 Golden Globes, Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Drama Series at the 2011 Screen Actors Guild Awards; and was twice nominated at The People’s Choice Awards in 2011 and 2015.

### **MARK JOHNSON - Producer**

Mark Johnson is both an Oscar- (RAIN MAN) and Emmy- (BREAKING BAD) winning producer, with a resume that includes over forty films and television series.

His first film, 1982’s DINER, was a critical and commercial hit, and marked the beginning of his twelve-year partnership with writer-director Barry Levinson. In addition to RAIN MAN , their diverse and acclaimed slate of features includes GOOD MORNING, VIETNAM, THE NATURAL, TIN MEN, AVALON and BUGSY, nominated for 10 Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Director. His recent slate of motion pictures includes the CHRONICLES OF NARNIA franchise and David Chase’s directorial debut NOT FADE AWAY.

He also produced Alfonso Cuarón’s A LITTLE PRINCESS; THE NOTEBOOK, based on Nicholas Sparks’ bestselling novel; Lance Hammer’s Sundance award-winning film BALLAST; the Tim Allen and Sigourney Weaver sci-fi comedy GALAXY QUEST; THE ROOKIE directed by John Lee Hancock; Mike Newell’s gangster drama DONNIE BRASCO starring Johnny Depp and Al Pacino; and Clint Eastwood’s A PERFECT WORLD starring Kevin Costner. He is currently in post-production on the Alexander Payne film DOWNSIZING, starring Matt Damon and the Steven Soderbergh movie LOGAN LUCKY, starring Channing Tatum and Daniel Craig.

In Australia, Johnson has produced THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE VOYAGE OF THE DAWN TREADER, and DON’T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK, presented by Guillermo Del Toro and starring Katie Holmes and Guy Pearce.

Beyond the big screen, Johnson has executive produced the Peabody and Emmy Award-winning drama BREAKING BAD and the Peabody-winning RECTIFY. He is also the executive producer of Sony/AMC’s BETTER CALL SAUL and the AMC original series HALT AND CATCH FIRE.

Johnson is a member of the Board of Governors of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and has served for 16 years as the Chair of the Academy's Foreign Language Film Selection Committee.

#### **Jamie Hilton – Producer**

Jamie Hilton heads production at his Sydney-based company See Pictures. His theatrical debut was Claire McCarthy's *THE WAITING CITY*, shot in India in 2009 and starring Joel Edgerton and Radha Mitchell. Jamie executive produced Julie Leigh's *SLEEPING BEAUTY*, selected for Official Competition at Cannes in 2011, and selling in all major territories. In 2014, Jamie financed and produced the supernatural thriller *BACKTRACK* for director Michael Petroni (*NARNIA: DAWNTREADER*, *THE RITE*), *THE LITTLE DEATH* for Josh Lawson and executive produced *WYRMWOOD: ROAD OF THE DEAD* for the Roache-Turner Brothers. In 2015, he financed and produced *OTHERLIFE* for Ben C. Lucas and the short *MARTHA THE MONSTER* for director Christopher Weekes (*MUPPET MAN*). Development projects include *SIERRA* for director Pierre Morel (*TAKEN*, *THE GUNMAN*), sci-fi thriller *ATOMICA*, Matt Nable's crime drama *THE 1%*, *GODFREY* for Wayne Blair (*THE SAPPHIRES*) and *FLAMMABLE CHILDREN* for Stephan Elliott (*THE ADVENTURES OF PRISCILLA, QUEEN OF THE DESERT*).

Hilton has produced over 100 shorts, music videos and commercials. His films have screened and won awards at Cannes, Toronto, SxSW, Tribeca, Sydney, New York, Rome, Paris and London. He was named in the top 10 people to watch by *Inside Film* magazine in 2010 and voted top producer at the 2012 Melbourne 37<sup>o</sup> South Market by attending international financiers. At Cannes in 2013, Jamie was the only Australian representative featured in Screen International's 'Future Leaders' showcase. In 2015, See Pictures received Enterprise Growth funding from Screen Australia and Industry Enhancement and Slate Development funding from Screen West. See Pictures and low-budget division Ticket to Ride set up offices in Perth in early 2016.

#### **Tom Williams – Executive Producer**

Tom Williams began his film career as an assistant at Scott Rudin Productions, and, after going to work at Imagine Entertainment, earned his first screen credit on *THE NUTTY PROFESSOR 2: THE KLUMPS* as assistant to Brian Grazer. Soon after, he began working for Mark Johnson at Gran Via Productions and worked on location on films such as *THE NOTEBOOK* and *THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE*.

After several years, Williams began overseeing the company's feature slate, where he supervised development and production on *THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA*, *THE HUNTING PARTY* and *HOW TO EAT FRIED WORMS*, among others. He served as executive producer on the Miramax/FilmDistrict feature *DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK*, presented by Guillermo Del Toro and starring Katie Holmes and Guy Pearce, and co-producer on the indie *BLESS ME, ULTIMA*, directed by Carl Franklin. He was executive producer on Twentieth Century Fox/Walden Media's *WON'T BACK DOWN*, directed by Daniel Barnz, and starring Viola Davis and Maggie Gyllenhaal. In 2014, he co-directed with Tom Dolby the feature *LAST WEEKEND*, starring Patricia Clarkson and Joseph Cross, released by Sundance Selects.

## CAST

### **Elizabeth Debicki – Eva**

Elizabeth Debicki made her international film debut in 2013, starring as Jordan Baker in Baz Luhrmann's *THE GREAT GATSBY*, alongside Leonardo DiCaprio, Tobey Maguire, Carrie Mulligan and Joel Edgerton. Debicki's performance earned a Best Supporting Actress Award from the Australian Film Institute, as well as nominations from The Australian Film Critics Association, Film Critics Circle of Australia and the UK's Empire Awards. Her growing list of film credits include a starring role in Guy Ritchie's *THE MAN FROM UNCLE* with Alicia Vikander and Henry Cavill; Justin Kurzel's *MACBETH*, with Michael Fassbender and Marion Cotillard; and Baltasar Kormakur's *EVEREST*, with Jake Gyllenhaal, Keira Knightley, Robin Wright and Josh Brolin. 2017 releases include *GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY VOLUME 2* and the J.J. Abrams action-thriller *GOD PARTICLE*.

On television, her performance in the AMC/BBC action series *THE NIGHT MANAGER* directed by Susanne Bier has been critically applauded alongside co-stars Hugh Lawrie and Tom Hiddleston. In theatre, she made her professional debut in 2011, starring in the Melbourne Theatre Company's production of *THE GIFT* and, in 2013, she starred alongside Cate Blanchett and Isabelle Huppert in The Sydney Theatre Company's production of Genet's *THE MAIDS*, which received wide critical praise and went on to premiere at The Lincoln Centre Festival in New York.

### **Richard Roxburgh – Mr. Pike**

Award-winning actor Richard Roxburgh has worked on stage and screen around the world. His screen credits include *MOULIN ROUGE!*, *DOING TIME FOR PATSY CLINE*, *MISSION IMPOSSIBLE II*, *OSCAR & LUCINDA*, *THANK GOD HE MET LIZZIE*, *CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION*, *THE TURNING (Reunion)*, *MATCHING JACK* and James Cameron's action adventure film *SANCTUM*. Most recently, Roxburgh appeared opposite Radha Mitchell and Odessa Young in Sue Brooks' *LOOKING FOR GRACE*.

Television credits include the ABC hit series *RAKE*, which he also co-creates, produces and which recently filmed its fourth season. His performance earned him a TV WEEK Silver Logie for Most Outstanding Actor and the 2012 AACTA Award for Best Actor in a Television Series. Other credits include the TV movie *HAWKE*, the mini-series *BLUE MURDER*, as well as the drama series *THE SILENCE* and *EAST OF EVERYTHING*. Roxburgh's stage credits include Chekhov adaptation *THE PRESENT* (Sydney Theatre Company), continuing his association with Cate Blanchett, with whom he also appeared as the title character in the STC's hugely successful production of Chekhov's *UNCLE VANYA*. The play had revivals at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. and at the Lincoln Centre in New York. Additional stage credits include *WAITING FOR GODOT*, *TOY SYMPHONY*, *THE SEAGULL*, *HAMLET* and *CLOSER*. As a director, his debut film, *ROMULUS, MY FATHER*, starring Eric Bana, drew critical acclaim when it was released in 2007.

### **Rachael Blake – Mrs. Pike**

Rachael Blake was most recently seen in the ABC series *RAKE*, James Vanderbilt's feature *TRUTH*, alongside Cate Blanchett and Robert Redford and Alex Proyas' *GODS OF EGYPT*, alongside Nikolaj Coster-Waldau and Gerard Butler. Her role in *MELODY* won her the Best Actress Award at the 2014 Montreal Film Festival. Other feature credits include Stephen Lance's *MY MISTRESS*; Julia Leigh's *SLEEPING BEAUTY*, which screened in competition at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival; *CHERRY TREE LANE*; *PINPRICK*; *SUMMER*, opposite Robert Carlyle; *DERAILED*, opposite Clive Owen; Alkinos Tsilimidos' *TOM WHITE*, which earned her nominations for the AFI Award and Film Critics Circle of Australia Award for Best Supporting Actress, *PERFECT STRANGERS*; Ray Lawrence's *LANTANA*, for which she was awarded AFI and IF Awards and a nomination for an FCCA Award for Best Actress, *BLINDMAN'S BLUFF*, *PAWS*; and *WHISPERING IN THE DARK*.

Rachael has won an AFI Award and a Silver Logie for her television work, which includes MISS FISHER'S MURDER MYSTERIES, WILDSIDE, WATER RATS, HOME AND AWAY, HEARTBREAK HIGH, THE STRAITS and GRASS ROOTS. Other television credits include THE DIPLOMAT, BON VOYAGE, CORRIGAN, NOWHERE TO LAND, AUF WIEDERSEHEN, PET, CLAPHAM JUNCTION, INSPECTOR LEWIS, FALSE WITNESS, THE PRISONER and HAWKE. Blake was awarded the Centenary Medal for her services to the Australian Film Industry in 2001.

## **CREW**

### **Steven Jones-Evans – Production Designer**

Steven Jones-Evans began his career designing Australian pop music videos in the 1990s, which quickly led to short films and eventually features, beginning with Geoffrey Wright's ROMER STOMPER, for which he was nominated for the 1993 AFI Award for Best Production Design. Feature films he's production designed include Jonathan Teplitzky's THE RAILWAY MAN, starring Nicole Kidman and Colin Firth; Daniel Nettheim's THE HUNTER, starring Willem Dafoe; THE TREE, starring Charlotte Gainsbourg and Martin Csokas; Anna Reeves' OYSTER FARMER, for which he won the AFI Award for Best Production Design; Gregor Jordan's NED KELLY, for which he won the IF Award for Best Production Design; and Shirley Barrett's Caméra d'Or-winning LOVE SERENADE.

Jones-Evans has been nominated a total of 11 times for AFI/AACTA Awards, as well as IF and Australian Production Design Guild nominations. His latest collaborations were with director Simon Stone on THE DAUGHTER and Ariel Kleinman on PARTISAN, for which Steven was nominated for the AACTA Award for Best Production Design.

### **Dany Cooper – Editor**

Dany Cooper ASE has an extensive list of credits and awards for both Australian and international films and television that include four Australian Screen Editors Awards, two AFI/AACTA Awards and six nominations, a Film Critics Circle of Australia Award, as well as an IF Nomination and an Emmy Nomination.

Cooper won her first AFI Award in 1994 for Michael Rymer's ANGEL BABY. She went on to edit Samantha Lang's THE WELL, which screened in Official Competition at the Cannes Film Festival; Neil Armfield's CANDY, starring Heath Ledger and Abbie Cornish; Jeremy Sim's BENEATH HILL 60, ORANGES AND SUNSHINE, directed by Jim Loach and starring Emily Watson and Hugo Weaving; and Wayne Blair's THE SAPPHIRES, which screened at Cannes. Recent feature films include HOLDING THE MAN, directed by Neil Armfield, for which she won an ASE award and received an AACTA nomination, and MEASURE OF A MAN, directed by Jim Loach and starring Donald Sutherland.

Cooper was nominated for a 2004 Emmy Award for her work on the Universal Pictures TV miniseries BATTLESTAR GALACTICA. She worked on Seasons 1 and 2 of the groundbreaking Indigenous drama series for the ABC, REDFERN NOW, as well as the mini-series DEADLINE GALLIPOLI, directed by Michael Rymer for NBCU Matchbox.

### **Harry Gregson-Williams - Composer**

Harry Gregson-Williams is one of Hollywood's most sought after composers, whose scores span the spectrum from action to drama to animation. He was the composer on all four installments of the SHREK franchise, garnering a BAFTA nomination for the score of the first film; and receiving Golden Globe and Grammy Award nominations for his score to Andrew Adamson's THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE.

He has worked multiple times with high profile directors including Ridley Scott on PROMETHEUS, KINGDOM OF HEAVEN and THE MARTIAN; Tony Scott on UNSTOPPABLE, THE TAKING OF PELHAM 1 2 3, DÉJÀ VU, DOMINO, MAN ON FIRE, SPY GAME and ENEMY OF THE STATE; Ben Affleck on THE TOWN, GONE BABY GONE and LIVE BY NIGHT; Joel Schumacher on TWELVE, THE NUMBER 23, VERONICA GUERIN and PHONE BOOTH; Bille August on RETURN TO SENDER and SMILLA'S SENSE OF SNOW; and with Antoine Fuqua on THE REPLACEMENT KILLERS and THE EQUALIZER.

Other films include X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE, THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: PRINCE CASPIAN, BRIDGET JONES: THE EDGE OF REASON, Aardman's ARTHUR CHRISTMAS and CHICKEN RUN, and the unique documentary LIFE IN A DAY. Recent scores include MISS YOU ALREADY, for director Catherine Hardwicke; THE ZOOKEEPER'S WIFE, starring Jessica Chastain and directed by Niki Caro; and the HBO series CONFIRMATION.

### **Marden Dean – Director of Photography**

Marden is a young and talented award-winning cinematographer working across drama, documentary, music videos and commercials. He has just completed work on the feature film BREATH (dir. Simon Baker), recently completed shooting the feature film BOYS IN THE TREES (dir. Matthew Moore) for Mushroom Pictures and the short film PROBLEM PLAY (dir. Matthew Moore) for Porchlight Films.

Other recent credits include the feature film FELL (dir. Kasimir Burgess) for Footprint Films and Felix Media, for which he earned an AACTA Award nomination for Best Cinematography. Marden shot the feature film THE INFINITE MAN (dir. Hugh Sullivan) for Hedone Productions which premiered at SXSW Film Festival and has been described by time.com as one of the 'ten films that made SXSW spectacular'. Marden has completed a Masters in Cinematography with the Australian Film, Television and Radio School and has gone on to enjoy collaborations which have taken him across Australia and around the globe.

### **Rick Rifici – Water Cinematographer**

Rick Rifici is an award-winning Australian director of photography with over 25 years' experience.

Drawing on skills and disciplines from his roots in broadcast television, Rick has progressed to become one of the world's most highly regarded and sought-after water cinematographers, having worked on numerous feature films and international TVCs, in addition to his ongoing work in action sports films and documentaries. Although he has shot countless productions on 16mm and 35mm film, Rifici is well respected in the industry for his adventurous and trailblazing attitude towards trialling and embracing new technologies.

Rifici's feature film credits include ADORE, starring Naomi Watts and Robin Wright and DRIFT, starring Sam Worthington, for which he was nominated for the AACTA award for Best Cinematography. His TVC and corporate clientele include international brands such as Red Bull, Samsung, Quiksilver, Nike, Mastercard, Adidas and Land Rover.

### **Terri Lamera – Costume Designer**

Terri Lamera is an Australian costume designer with over 25 years' experience in the Australian film industry who sees the creation of characters in costume as an important part of filmmaking.

Most recently, Lamera was the costume designer for 1% starring Ryan Corr and Abbey Lee; Ben Elton's THREE SUMMERS; and the critically-acclaimed HOUNDS OF LOVE, which screened at the 73<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Venice Film Festival. Other previous projects include LOOKING FOR GRACE, SON OF A GUN and KILL ME THREE TIMES. In television, Lamera's most notable work includes designing the costumes for AN ACCIDENTAL SOLDIER, for which she was nominated for an AACTA Awards for Best Costume Design in Television; and the adaptation of Tim Winton's CLOUDSTREET.

### **Shane Thomas – Hair and Make Up**

Shane Thomas is one of Australia's leading hair and makeup designers for film and television, working in Australia and internationally.

Recent credits include the Academy Award-winning film HACKSAW RIDGE, for which Thomas was nominated for a BAFTA Award and an AACTA Award; UNBROKEN, directed by Angelina Jolie; personal makeup artist to Emmanuelle Béart on MY MISTRESS; THE RAILWAY MAN, which starred Colin Firth and Nicole Kidman; ADORE, which starred Naomi Watts and Robin Wright; and PJ Hogan's MENTAL. He also worked on SUPERMAN RETURNS, STAR WARS: EPISODE III – REVENGE OF THE SITH, PETER PAN and BABE: PIG IN THE CITY. His work will soon be seen in the Errol Flynn biopic, IN LIKE FLYNN and THE KING'S DAUGHTER starring Pierce Brosnan and Rachel Griffiths.

For television, Thomas has worked on the TV series RAKE and EAST WEST 101.

### **FULL CREDITS**

SCREEN AUSTRALIA  
GREAT SOUTHERN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
SCREENWEST  
LOTTERYWEST  
Present

in association with  
AUTUMN PRODUCTIONS  
DELUXE AUSTRALIA  
EMBANKMENT FILMS

a GRAN VIA, WINDALONG SEE PICTURES production

“BREATH”

SIMON BAKER

ELIZABETH DEBICKI

SAMSON COULTER

BEN SPENCE

and RICHARD ROXBURGH

Casting by  
NIKKI BARRETT CSA

Costume Designer  
TERRI LAMERA

Sound Designer  
ROBERT MACKENZIE

Water Photography  
RICK RIFICI

Music by  
HARRY GREGSON-WILLIAMS

Production Designer  
STEVEN JONES-EVANS APDG

Edited by  
DANY COOPER ASE

Cinematographer  
MARDEN DEAN

Co-Producer  
CHRIS VEERHUIS

Line Producer  
BARBARA GIBBS

Executive Producers  
DAVE HANSEN  
JOHNNY MAC  
LAURA RISTER

Executive Producer  
TOM WILLIAMS

Based on the novel by  
TIM WINTON

Screenplay by  
GERARD LEE  
SIMON BAKER  
TIM WINTON

Produced by  
MARK JOHNSON  
SIMON BAKER

JAMIE HILTON

Directed by  
SIMON BAKER