

## Rachel WARD



Genre: Drama  
Format: 35mm  
Estimated Running Time: 90min.

Budget:  
US\$4,300,000 (HK\$33,540,000)

Producers:  
Leah CHURCHILL-BROWN  
Bryan BROWN

Writing Credits:  
Newton THORNBURG (novel)  
Rachel Ward (screenplay)

Production Companies:  
DOLLNEW /  
TOWN FILMS

HAF Goals:  
Co-producers, Sales agents, Pre-sales, Funds

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### Introduction

Rachel Ward, who became a world-famous star with the 1980s miniseries *The Thorn Birds*, also has become an acclaimed director of short films and TV dramas. Her debut feature, *Beautiful Kate*, offers a film about awakening teenage sexuality, beauty and forbidden passion, interwoven with an emotional journey of reconciliation between an estranged father and son. The setting of *Beautiful Kate*, the Australian outback, provides the film with a desolate and exotic landscape that emphasizes feelings of isolation and alienation.

### Synopsis

Set on a homestead in the mythical Australian outback, *Beautiful Kate* is the story of Ned Kendall, his relationship as a teenager with his twin sister Kate, and the emotional aftermath of her death in a car accident at the age of sixteen.

Told in parallel narratives of past and present, the story follows adult Ned's return home after an absence of twenty years. The impetus for his visit is that his father Bruce is dying and has demanded his return. Along for the ride with Ned is his 21-year old fiancée, Toni, a sexy waitress/wannabe actress who knows nothing about Ned's family and is surprised to learn of the existence of his twin.

Toni is completely astonished to find, by stumbling on Ned's diary, that the relationship with Kate had entered uncharted territory in its intimacy. It reveals how the innocence of adolescent curiosity can, in moments of irresistible desire, cross the boundaries of acceptable affection and introduce innocent young people to adult tragedy.

Toni, unable to cope with the revelation, flees back to the city leaving father and son alone together. Past events become clearer to Ned and he realises, almost too late, that he has wrongly held his father responsible for Kate's death. Seeing the truth for the first time Ned is able to let go of his obsession for his beloved sister and allow his father to die in peace.

### Director's Statement

Some filmmakers want to make their audiences laugh. Some want to scare them. Some want to thrill them. I want to move them. *Beautiful Kate* is a story of a family, whose all too human mistakes lead to tragedy, recrimination, guilt and finally salvation. *Beautiful Kate* recounts the sexual awakening of three siblings growing up in isolation, interwoven with an emotional journey of reconciliation between an estranged father and son.

This story paints an extreme portrait of family dysfunction, but its position is ultimately positive. Reconciliation is available to us all, and peace and love are always possible.

*Beautiful Kate* is unabashedly sexy. Like *Rain*, *In My Father's Den*, *Somewhere in Africa*, *Under the Skin* and *My Summer of Love*, it tells a story where the young female characters yearn to find and to express their sexual identities.

There are a number of fairly explicit sexual scenes here. While I do not intend to enter Larry Clarke territory, I will not be prudish. This film is

provocative. I will not shy away from the visual appeal of youth and beauty.

*Beautiful Kate* is not only a provocative, sensual and ultimately moving human drama but also one that exploits the mythical interior of Australia. This frontier land of rugged cowboys, long horned cattle and battered Acubras remains our most enduring export aesthetic.

Believability and focus on the story and characters are paramount so the present day narrative, which is character driven and largely interior, will be naturalistic in tone. The highly subjective back-story, however, leads itself to a far more stylized approach. This will create a world of stark contrasts, where heavy shadows obliterate large sections of the characters and their world, revealing exquisite pockets of alabaster skin, bruised lips, sun-flecked eyelashes, a hint of pubic hair or a silhouetted breast. I want to use as much natural light as possible and underexpose the scenes. Less becomes more as we use our imaginations to conjure a whole.

### Director

Rachel Ward won the Australian Critics Circle Award for her short films *The Big House* in 2001 and *Martha's New Coat* in 2003. Both films were nominated for all major Australian awards and were sold commercially and screened in many international festivals. She also directed an episode of *Two Twisted* (2006) starring Greta Scacchi.

In her life as an actress, Rachel also received multiple international drama awards and nominations, including two Golden Globe nominations. She has starred in many international films, *Against All Odds* (1984), *The Good Wife* (1987) and *How To Get Ahead in Advertising* (1989) but is probably most well known for her portrayal of Meggie Cleary in one of the most successful mini-series ever, *The Thorn Birds* (1983).

### Producers

Leah Churchill-Brown set up the cutting-edge film production company, Doll which nurtures emerging Australian film and advertising directors. Leah's first credited feature film as producer is *Suburban Mayhem* (2006) with director Paul Goldman. Currently in development are the feature film projects *Skipping Girls* with Alice Bell and Paul Goldman, *The Cat Society Murders* with director, Cherie Nowlan.

Bryan Brown became not only an international actor but also an acclaimed producer. He began producing film and television, through his company New Town Films. He was commissioned to produce the Australian TV series *Twisted Tales* (1996) and following its success, a second series *Two Twisted* (2006). He also produced the three

short films - *Blindman's Bluff* (2000), *The Big House* (2001), and *Martha's New Coat* (2003) - all directed by Rachel Ward. In 2002, Bryan produced and starred in the feature film, *Dirty Deeds*, which was written and directed by David Caesar and became a major box office success.

### Production Company

Doll has established itself as a dynamic film production company producing high end commercials, feature films and operates as a highly effective production facilitation service, working with US and UK based production companies, and continues to nurture emerging Australian film and advertising directors. In 2006, Doll produced Paul Goldman's *Suburban Mayhem* (2006). The company is currently developing a number of feature film projects.

New Town Films has produced the three short films *Blindman's Bluff*, the 2000 AFI award winning *The Big House*, and the 50 minute drama *Martha's New Coat* all written and directed by Rachel Ward. *The Animated Leunig* together with 50 x 1 minute animations based on the cartoons of Michael Leunig, were completed in 2001. In 2002, New Town Films co-produced *Dirty Deeds*, which was written and directed by David Caesar and was a major box office success. Bryan is presently producing the Indie-Vision Film, *Cactus*.

