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Unwind



PAULA ABDUL
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Capturing beauty

It's taken more than 20 years from script to screen for Tom Scott's comedy drama *Separation City*, shot in Wellington and Berlin. With it comes the New Zealand feature debut of one of Wellington's most watched - but least-known - film-makers, Paul Middleditch. **Tom Cardy** reports.



Catching up: Tom Scott, left, and Paul Middleditch.
 Photo: DOMINION POST

PAUL MIDDLEITCH is one of the most successful and lauded directors to come out of Wellington in the past 25 years. But outside the film industry and film festival circuit he's virtually unknown.

The irony is that we've all seen his work and, more often than not, he's made us laugh.

His credits include the ASB Bank "Goldstein" commercials; others are Sky TV and Whittaker's Peanut Slab - the one where a door-knocking politician takes a bite and for once utters the truth.

In Australia, where Middleditch has been based since the early 1990s, he's made many more, as well as in Europe and Asia. In the United States, more than 100 million people last year saw his commercial for Diet Pepsi Max aired during the Super Bowl - and over the years he's had seven commercials screen during America's biggest sporting event.

The style of his commercials varies as much as what they advertise, but his forte is humour. He makes bloody funny ads.

Middleditch has garnered more than 200 awards and in industry surveys he's rated as the top commercial director in the southern hemisphere - and No 2 in the world. But with the release of new Kiwi movie *Separation City* - now screening in Invercargill - expect a lot more people to know and remember his name.

Middleditch has directed the comedy drama, which was written by *Dominion Post* cartoonist Tom Scott. It was largely shot in Wellington and includes scenes in Seatoun, which have a special significance for Middleditch, who grew up in the beach suburb. It's also where he began making his first films when he was just 10.

"I go back to Wellington three or four times a year, but I hadn't really come back and looked at it from a filming perspective.

"I spent a lot of time wandering around photographing and looking at the city. Apart from it being beautiful and wonderful, I really wanted to come back and make a film that had a huge affection for Wellington. (One that not only) showed the uniqueness of the architecture, the landscape, but the feeling of it. The Film Commission when they saw it said, 'We have never seen Wellington look this beautiful'. You look at it and you go, 'God, I love living there'. I set a lot of it around the harbour and the coastline because that's what Wellington is in many ways."

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Mainlander abroad

MATE
 MARK WILSON



IT'S not often that I manage to relocate my contented southern backside into New Zealand's other Island let alone if it has anything to do with golf!

However, a few weekends back I was given the callup to participate in the inaugural Lion Brown classic as a member of the Speight's team.

During my bumpy decent into the capital I took a look at the Miramar course we were to ply our trade on the next morning.

I was definitely going to be a danger to the adjoining property.

After touchdown I was bamboozled by the array of nationalities trying to lure me like a young child succumbing to candy into their taxi. I negotiated a rate to the city and attempted to explain to the driver I was here to help Otago win the Ranfurly shield so the Stags could get it the following weekend, he just looked at me blankly and nodded as if he understood.

I arrived at my inner-city accommodation and was informed by my long time local mate I had been fleeced by the driver. Southlanders don't haggle for taxis I tried to explain. Where was my mate Jamie Munro? He could con a mother out of her children in a haggle situation!

Golf started poorly, I emerged from my bedroom clad in my typical stepping-out clothes, a tatty pair of cutoff jeans shorts, which I have found work for rugby and also running races, not to mention are great for hunting and as a beachwear option in summer months. I was reminded that these wouldn't cut the mustard in fancy Wellington.

We were on a golf course by the sewage works - I thought it would be more than appropriate?

After a quick change we were off and I proceeded to spray balls to all parts, no window or adjacent fairway was safe and when I finally thought I had mastered the art of staying on the correct fairway I hit both bunkers on the 18th to wind up dead last.

However, a meltdown and accompanying club throw on an earlier hole by a player who has been granted name suppression saw me avoid the pink losers shirt. The next day I had a good play with the colossal squid exhibit in Te Papa and made friends with a lovely lass who worked in the marketing department who took us on a very intimate tour of the facility.

We were like young lambs racing on the flood banks let lose amongst the rides and exhibits, Te Papa is definitely worth a visit and I'm usually the last person to see any cultural attraction!

I wandered the local bars in search of one which played the Stags and served Speight's and to cap things off sort of tastefully ripped a few shreds off ex All Black Dave Loveridge when he referred to the Stags win over Waikato as an upset - the result was never in doubt, was it!

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