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The Southland Times

# Unwind

# Creating a Rocky Horror

Thirty-five years ago, Richard O'Brien created the *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, but he is the first to admit the cult hit was all a bit of an accident stemming from his own gender confusion, writes **Kimberley Rothwell**.

IT'S ironic that Richard O'Brien, the creator of *The Rocky Horror Show*, who's been celebrated as a son of New Zealand soil, has to jump through hoops to get New Zealand citizenship. "I don't understand," he says. "They built a statue of me and celebrate me as a New Zealander, but I have to go on my knees and do all sorts of things, and I'm probably too old. I think they should just rubber stamp it. I'm in the top 100 iconic New Zealanders on TV. I came in at 94 and I do realise that's rather low, but I still make the count. Never mind. I would certainly like to come out and retire to New Zealand."

It's hard to image the slim 68-year-old retiring. He looks too young and seems to have boundless energy. Even his voice sounds too young, and he picks his words carefully, rolling them round his mouth, peppering his sentences with the occasional expletive. He was born in Britain, but spent parts of his youth in Hamilton and Tauranga. The statue he talks about graces Hamilton's Victoria St. It's on the same spot as the barber shop where O'Brien cut hair for five years, before leaving for London on what was supposed to be a one-year working holiday.

He calls New Zealand his spiritual home, and has a property in the Waikato. A documentary about him filmed in Hamilton, *An Evening With Richard O'Brien*, screens in Wellington for the first time at the Out Takes Film Festival this week. Leaving New Zealand in his early 20s, he says he had a vague idea he wanted to be in showbiz. "I was a lost soul. I was under-educated. I showed no potential when I left school. I got a job riding horses in movies, that's how I started, and then I just went to evening school and studied drama."

He'd been writing songs when the chance to put together *The Rocky Horror Show* came along. "It was a happy accident that [the songs] kind of fitted in." It made his name, and the movie version *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* has just celebrated its 35th anniversary. It changed O'Brien's life, but not in ways one might expect.

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**Musical magic:** Richard O'Brien in a live audience interview with Mark Sainsbury at the Waikato University Performing Arts Centre in 2007. Photo: PETER DRURY



## Musing on AB selection

**MATE**  
MARK WILSON



**S**ELECTION for the All Blacks has always been a contentious issue. Rarely is a team named that appeases all spheres of the New Zealand rugby public.

This week I have gained a little insight on the historic development of this issue from some of my grandfather's friends and family who have joined us in saying goodbye to the tough old bugger who sadly passed away last week aged 82.

Jack McKenzie (pictured) or as he was known to me simply as Granddad pulled on the mighty maroon jumper some 62 times in the 40s and 50s and by all accounts could clear the ball from a ruck faster than your dad could swing a jandal at you for talking back to your mother.



He came fairly close to grabbing a run for the ABs earning a trial and sitting on the bench against the Aussies in 1949.

At the time, especially in the south, many reckon he probably deserved a dig at top honours but just as today there may have been a little politics involved.

Knowing Jack, he probably offended a few of the key figures by failing to adhere to what would have been common policy at the time: being a good Southern Man he was a bit rough around the edges and spoke his mind, while there was many a story mentioning a certain mysterious bottle of whiskey being charged to a selectors room after an All Black trial. He tended to do things his own way so to speak and you would be a brave man to try and change his mind.

Sixty years later we are fresh off the naming of what some critics are saying is an All Black team that will struggle to reach the impeccable standard we demand of our national side year in year out. If we look close to home, our own Jason Rutledge was being touted as a potential contender with Andrew Hore among the masses injured.

If it came down purely to form I don't think even a one-eyed Cantabrian or ill-informed Auckland could deny his deserved consideration.

Rutledge has unrivalled commitment both on and off the field and most importantly a lack of that glory boy larger than the game ego that suffers so many of our modern stars.

However, he is 32 years old. Graham Henry maybe thinks that's too old? He hasn't played for the All Blacks so would be an addition to the already bulging budget. Maybe he's not the size or the shape Henry is looking for. Or maybe he is from the wrong end of the country.

Whatever the reason it surely couldn't be because he didn't play well enough.

Wouldn't the world be a far simpler place if we picked a player who earned his jersey purely by playing better than everyone else in his position that season?

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