

how far would you go  
to follow your dream?



# HORROR MOVIE

a low budget nightmare

A documentary by Gary Doust

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# **HORROR MOVIE**

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**PRESS NOTES**

## **SYNOPSIS**

**LOG LINE:**

How far would you go to follow your dream?



**SYNOPSIS (ONE SENTENCE)**

A filmmaker's life-long dream turns into a nightmare when he sets out to make a super-low-budget horror film about an aborted foetus that seeks revenge on its family.

## SYNOPSIS (ONE PARAGRAPH)

Sick of playing roles like the 'diabetes patient' or the 'weird friend' on Australian TV, actor/filmmaker Craig Anderson embarks on a hilarious, tumultuous and blood-soaked journey to fulfil a life-long dream to make a horror film. With Hollywood 'scream queen' Dee Wallace (*E.T.*, *Cujo*, *The Howling*) onboard, it's not long before things wildly go off the rails and the dream turns into a low-budget nightmare.



## SYNOPSIS (SHORT)

A 'warts and all' documentary that follows a filmmaker's attempt to live out a childhood dream by making a super-low-budget horror feature, about an aborted foetus that seeks revenge on its family.

Tired of playing roles like the 'diabetes patient' or the 'weird friend' on Australian TV, actor/filmmaker Craig Anderson sets his sights on a career upgrade. With his and his brother's life savings on the line, he manages to sign up Hollywood 'scream queen' Dee Wallace (*E.T.*, *Cujo*, *The Howling*) to star in the film, but it is not long before things go wildly off the rails and his big dream turns into a nightmare.

With the budget spiraling out of control, union issues and even a circumcision to overcome, we follow this hilarious, moving and nail-biting rollercoaster journey from pre-production to the very end.



### SYNOPSIS (LONG)

Attempting to live out a life-long dream, actor/filmmaker Craig Anderson quits his TV day job to make a super-low-budget horror feature film called *Red Christmas*, about an aborted foetus that seeks revenge on its family.

Basing the production in his Marrickville warehouse where he sleeps on a mattress on the floor of his office, Craig has raised \$82,000 from his life savings to make the film. He gets a big break when American cult horror-movie actress Dee Wallace (*E.T. the Extra Terrestrial*, *Cujo*, *The Howling*) agrees to star in the film but this sucks up a big part of his budget, forcing him to think outside the box. He enlists the help of his quirky dad Rob as a location scout, even though he constantly offers up unwanted script advice.

It's not long before things go off the rails when Craig discovers he's \$80,000 short just a few weeks out from shooting.

With no other options, Craig turns to his working-class family for help talking his brother Todd into reluctantly lending him \$60,000 he was saving to buy an apartment.

Craig's ambitious plan to shoot 330 scenes just in 16 days gets a reality check when on the first day the first scene blows out to 9 hours. The production moves to Robertson, NSW, where things get worse. Craig's forgotten to clear Dee Wallace's appearance with powerful American actors' union SAG, which is now threatening to block her from entering the country to make the film.

As 12-hour days stretch to 14, the crew becomes exhausted. Things come to a head during an important scene involving Down syndrome actor Gerard O'Dwyer. Gerard's character 'Jerry' confronts his mother about trying to abort him. Emotions on-set become raw as it emerges that Gerard is drawing on his real-life relationship with his father to fuel his performance. The performance is electric, but the crew soon realises it has come at a cost.

With the nightmarish shoot behind him Craig sets out to edit the film himself, but the heat and noise from a construction site outside his warehouse become too much and Craig is forced to move to an unconventional location to edit the rest of the film.

With the film almost finished, *Red Christmas* is accepted into the prestigious Fantasia Film Festival. Films just like *Red Christmas* have been picked up at festivals like these for millions of dollars, launching filmmakers' careers - but Craig's dreams are crushed when no offers are forthcoming to buy the film. He may have blown his and family's money!

Months pass while Craig, still sleeping on his office floor, becomes more depressed, questioning all the sacrifices he's made to become a filmmaker. He's broke and desperately needs to start paying his brother back the \$60,000 he's borrowed.

A surprise visit from Gerard helps cheer him up. They sit down to watch *Red Christmas* again, motivating Craig to give selling the film one last try.



## FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

The production journeys of making both the documentary and *Red Christmas* were not dissimilar in many ways. The nature of getting an 'open ended' documentary like this funded, meant that almost three-quarters of the documentary needed to be shot before any funding was received.



While the main subject of the documentary Craig Anderson was struggling onscreen to find funds and doing many of the crew jobs himself, I too not only found myself directing and producing the documentary but also filming and recording the sound.

Many nights over 'burgers, Craig and I would discuss the challenges of trying to get films made in Australia. Craig and I had become friends on a documentary series I directed called *Next Stop Hollywood* a few years earlier. Since then we both spent a lot of time and energy pitching projects we both honestly thought would be great but were never funded. Craig's belief that this was going to be his make-or-break film and one that would determine his future as a filmmaker, was something that I also very much related to.

After completing *Making Venus* in 2002, an award-winning 'unmaking of' documentary about the production of a film entitled *The Venus Factory* that went horribly wrong, my initial response was not to become involved in this similar project. But after hearing some of the hilarious (and scary) stories about how Craig was planning to make his film, I couldn't help but just pick up the camera and start shooting!

Fifteen years on from *Making Venus* a lot has changed in the new fast-paced, digital world of filmmaking and distribution where Netflix, Amazon and Hulu are quickly taking over the world. Through Craig's journey making his film, this documentary became an opportunity to pick up where I had left off with *Making Venus* to capture the many new challenges independent filmmakers now face to make their films, have them seen and return a profit.

Low-budget feature film shoots are always gruelling and as someone documenting the journey, you always try to guess where the story is going so you can be prepared for it. When I learnt that Craig was planning to film 330 scenes in 16 days I honestly expected things would fall apart. Either the schedule would get so far behind they'd have to start dropping scenes or the days would get so long the crew would mutiny. Neither of these things happened, and miraculously Craig shot all 330 scenes! I put this down to Craig's ability to put together the right crew. While many of them lacked hands-on experience, they possessed the skills to think 'out of the box', enabling them to move extremely quickly to keep the camera rolling. I have no doubt if you transplanted an experienced feature film crew onto the set of *Red Christmas*, it would not have worked.

Like Craig I was extremely nervous about working with actress Dee Wallace. This was amplified because Craig had only told Dee about the documentary a few weeks before shooting, and she didn't fully realise that the nature of observational documentary filmmaking meant my camera would be rolling for a large part of the journey. She also had an uncanny ability to always know when my camera was filming her (even from behind), and I had no doubt who would have to go if I stepped over the line. Luckily for me once Dee settled into the shoot she was very generous with her time. This didn't ease my nerves when it came time to send her a fine-cut of the documentary. Almost immediately she watched it and responded, *"I love it. I really loved it... It's honest and moving, and every filmmaker should see it. I got such an insight into Craig and fell in love with him all over again"*.

A highlight of making the documentary was getting to know Down syndrome actor Gerard O'Dwyer who plays 'Jerry' in the film. He was always a lot of fun to be around and I love the fact 18 months after shooting *Red Christmas* he still calls me every few months to tell me some random fact about life. Myself and many of the crew were moved to tears while filming the emotionally charged scene where he confronts his on-screen mother (Dee Wallace) about her wanting to abort him because he had Down syndrome. Immediately following that scene I was brought to tears again during an interview on the floor in the make-up room where Gerard expressed his frustrations about having a disability. He is such a great character in the film, I was delighted he makes a return later in the documentary appearing in one of my favourite scenes where he acts out the movie title *Saw* for Craig.

Beyond documenting the behind-the-scenes process or even the over-the-top, super-gory horror effects, at the heart of ***Horror Movie A Low Budget Nightmare*** is a universal underdog story about putting everything on the line to follow a dream against the odds. I hope many will relate to the journey as much as I did while making this film.

## FILMMAKER BIOS

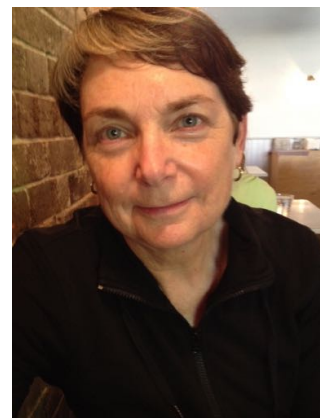
### GARY DOUST - DIRECTOR / PRODUCER



For more than 15 years, Gary Doust has been building a reputation for humorous and often quirky character-based observational Australian documentaries. His credits include the feature documentary *Making Venus* which won the Film Critics Circle Jury Prize and the IF Independent Spirit Award. He also made the multi-award-winning Tropfest finalists *Great White Hunters* and *Murbah Swamp Beer*. Other directing credits include *Embedded With Sheik Hilaly (SBS)* and the factual TV series *Battle Of The Brains (ABC1)*, *Blue Zoo (ABC3)* and *Next Stop Hollywood (ABC1)* for which he received ADG Award nominations for the last two.

### MEGAN MCMURCHY - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Megan McMurphy is an independent producer with more than 50 hours of television credits as Producer or EP. Most recently she co-produced the feature documentary *Tyke Elephant Outlaw (BBC, Netflix, NatGeo Latin America)* and produced the web drama series *I Luv U But*. She produced the series *Fine Line* and *Hybrid Life* for SBS TV and was series producer of Hoodlum's multi-platform interactive series *Fat Cow Motel* for ABC TV. Her award-winning documentary titles include *Mr Patterns*, *Remembering Rain*, *Sadness* and *For Love or Money*. She also produced the feature films *Footy Legends*, *Talk* and *Breathing Under Water*.



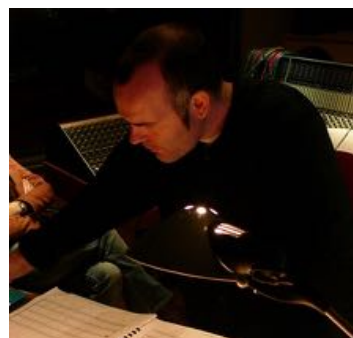
## **JULIE-ANNE DE RUVO - EDITOR**



With her intuitive eye Julie-Anne De Ruvo is arguably one of the best observational documentary editors working in Australia today. Her credits include *Next Stop Hollywood* (ABC1), *Embedded With Sheik Hilaly* (SBS), and *Great White Hunters* (all with Gary Doust as director), plus *Desperate Man Blues* (SBS) and *Storm Surfers* (Discovery). She is also highly sought after as a drama editor with credits that include *Nowhere Boys* (ABC3), *Laid* (ABC), *Please Like Me- Seasons 2 and 3* (ABC) and the feature films *The Turning* and *Razzle Dazzle*. She has just completed work as editor on the American thriller / horror film *Better Watch Out* set for a US theatrical release in late 2017.

## **JOHN GRAY - COMPOSER**

John Gray is a multi-award winning film composer, having written both orchestral and electronic scores for film - some of which have been finalists and winners at The Emmys, Sundance, - to name a few. His film and TV credits include *Blue Murder* (2017), *The Surgery Ship*, *The Opposition*, *Love and Marriage in Kabul*, *What Lola Wants*, *Manny Lewis*, *Go Back To Where You Came From*, *I Am A Girl*, *Next Stop Hollywood*, *Revolution School*, *The Bet*, *Coffin Rock* and *Kokoda*. He has also released and toured nationally in rock bands, released experimental work for installations and radio airplay, and created electronic soundscapes for internationally acknowledged films.



## ON SCREEN CHARACTERS

### CRAIG ANDERSON - ACTOR / FILMMAKER

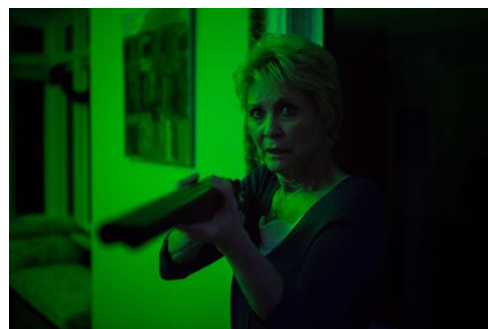


Craig Anderson is a comedian who works in the medium of film and TV. As an actor he has appeared in many successful comedy television programs including *Black Comedy*, *Double The Fist*, *The Moodys*, *Review With Myles Barlow*, and *The Elegant Gentleman's Guide To Knife Fighting*. He starred in indie comedy feature *The Tail Job*

which premiered at Slamdance 2016. Craig has starred in the ob-doc programs *Next Step Hollywood* and *Miso Hungry*. As a director Craig is a two-time AACTA award winner (AFI: Best Comedy TV Series 2004, AACTA: Best Director - Light Entertainment or Reality 2015) and an International Gold Promax for his network promos for Showtime Australia. Craig began his career in theatre and has First Class Honours in Performance Studies from the University of Western Sydney, where he also lectured for three years in Performance and Anthropology. He has currently deferred the writing of his PhD, an epistemological analysis of academia on comedy.

### DEE WALLACE - ACTRESS 'DIANE'

Dee Wallace is an American actress known for her 'scream queen' roles in several popular films in the horror genre, including *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977), *The Howling* (1981) and *Cujo* (1983). Her most widely seen performance is the starring role as Elliott's mother, Mary, in the Steven Spielberg film *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982). Her other film appearances include *The Stepford Wives* (1975), *10* (1979) and *Critters* (1986). In addition to Spielberg she has worked with many other accomplished film directors including Wes Craven, Peter Jackson, Joe Dante and more recently Rob Zombie. In 2016 she was nominated for the 2016 Daytime Emmy Award for Outstanding Special Guest Performer in a Drama Series for her role on the ABC soap opera *General Hospital*.



## GERARD O'DWYER - ACTOR 'JERRY'



Gerard O'Dwyer was awarded Best Male Actor at Tropfest in 2009 for his role in *Be My Brother*, which also won Best Film. Most recently he flew to Russia to accept an award for *The Interviewer*, a short film in which he played the leading role. He won Best Actor runner-up in 2010 at the Short

and Sweet Play Festival, the largest festival of 10-minute plays in the world. Gerard has recently been cast in another Australian feature film starring alongside Aussie screen legend, John Jarratt. Gerard uses his profile to challenge societal stereotypes and his work includes dramatic performances in film, television and theatre. In 2010, 2011 and 2015 Gerard was selected as an Ambassador for the NSW state government's Don't DISMyABILITY campaign and he has featured in an advertisement for the NSW Government's CareCareers campaign. Notably, in 2012 Gerard was recognised by the Australian Government and was awarded the Emerging Leaders Award at the National Disabilities Awards.

## BRYAN MOSES - 1<sup>ST</sup> ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Bryan is a Sydney-based comedy writer, director and producer. Over a career of 15 years Bryan has created award-winning TV series, short films and commercials. He is a five-time finalist in Tropfest - the world's biggest short film festival. His latest film *The Mistake* has been



watched over 4 million times on YouTube. Bryan wrote, directed and starred in the cult Australian comedy TV series *Double the Fist*, which won the AFI award for best comedy series and is currently being optioned for US television. Bryan's other credits include directing comedy series *Back Seat Drivers* for ABC, Screen Australia and YouTube funded web series *Axis all Areas* with the Axis of Awesome, and comedy documentary *The Arcibo Message* for SBS. Bryan wrote and directed the comedy feature film *The Tail Job* which screened at Slamdance Film Festival last year.

## ROB ANDERSON - CRAIG'S DAD



Rob Anderson worked as Retail Store Manager and then National Sales Manager in the hardware industry for more than 45 years before retiring in 2010. During this time he settled down in the outer-western Sydney suburb of St Clair where, along with his wife Lynn, he raised his three sons Robbie, Todd and Craig. Since retiring he does volunteer work for the Royal Institute for the Deaf and Blind and the Lantern Club. Over the years he has been a big supporter of Craig's film work, notably starring as 'the Getaway Driver', in Craig's award-winning first short film *Life In a Datsun* and 'The Dirty Old Man' and 'The Groom's Father' in episodes of the ABC comedy series *How Not To Behave* which Craig directed.

## ABOUT RED CHRISTMAS

### RED CHRISTMAS SYNOPSIS

Matriarch Diane (Dee Wallace) has invited her children to celebrate one last Christmas in their family home. Amid celebrations and domestic drama, they receive a visit from a mysterious stranger. Disfigured and cloaked, they feel sorry for him until they discover his extreme religious motives and anti-abortion message. Diane orders him to leave, unaware he is her son. Twenty years ago she had an abortion and on that day a religious zealot bombed the clinic. Her still-living foetus was taken and raised by the bomber. After being rejected by his mother once again when all he wanted was love, he seeks vengeance and kills the family who cast him out. *Red Christmas* is a character-driven horror film, which tackles the abortion debate from multiple angles.



## CRAIG ANDERSON ON WRITING *RED CHRISTMAS*



From its inception the script took a couple of years to write. Abortion is a subject that hasn't been explored widely in horror film, despite the genre's ability to tackle challenging subjects.

At first I wrote a screwball horror; a foetus who attacks its mother (think Larry Cohen, Frank Henenlotter, or early Peter Jackson). But after many stilted redrafts and viewing of many documentaries on the subject the tone shifted.

I did a lot of research both academically and in person with women of all ages and backgrounds who had varying experiences and opinions on abortion. What I've tried to present is a question rather than an answer. Interestingly, some people read this script and think it's pro-choice and others are just as adamant it's pro-life. I do accept that in personifying the foetus, turning it into a human, I have made a pro-life statement, which in turn murders nine people.

Wanting a scream queen to play Diane, I knew the women I'd be approaching would have read infinitely more horror scripts than me. So I worked tirelessly to make sure the script was funny as well as horrific, character-driven, engaging and visceral.

Armed with a lean, mean 92-page script, we hit the Southern Highlands of New South Wales and made *Red Christmas*.



# END CREDITS

Director / Producer

GARY DOUST

Executive Producer

MEGAN McMURCHY

Editor

JULIE-ANNE DE RUVO

Composer

JOHN GRAY

Sound Design

MARK TANNER

Camera / Sound

GARY DOUST

Additional Camera

CODY RICHARDSON

DOUGLAS BURGDORFF

BRYAN MOSES

Titles Designer

ANNA FRASER

Post Production Facility

DEFINITION FILMS

Production Producer

DAVID GROSS

Conform Editor

WAYNE C. BLAIR

Colourist	JAMIE HEDIGER
Online Editor	BEN BLICK-HODGE
Sound Post Facility	MARK TANNER SOUND
Stills Photographer	JEREMY BELINFANTE
Poster Design	JEREMY SAUNDERS
Post Production Scripts	REEZY MILLER SCRIPT SERVICES
Legal Services	JENNY LALOR LALOR LAW

Archive

ABC LIBRARY SALES

CRAIG FX

CHANNEL NINE

JUNGLE FTV

MATCHBOX PICTURES

PORCHLIGHT FILMS

STARCHILD MEDIA

For Screen Australia

SAM GRIFFIN

LIZ STEVENS

For ABC Arts

LINDA BRUSASCO

MANDY CHANG

The producers wish to thank

CRAIG ANDERSON

DEE WALLACE, GERARD O'DWYER, BRYAN MOSES

ROB, LYNN, TODD & ROBBIE ANDERSON

& THE CAST AND CREW OF 'RED CHRISTMAS'

DANIELLA ORTEGA, DOUG BAYNE, MICHAEL BLAKE, VERONICA FURY, SASCHA ETTINGER EPSTEIN, MARTIN CONNER, ROB MARJENBERG, BEN RUDMAN, RICHARD GRANT, CYRUS IRANI, JODI MATTERSON. GLENN EVANS, ISABEL PEPPARD, ANNE O'DWYER, BELINDA KING, PAT FISKE, STEFAN MOORE, SUSAN LAMBERT, GABY MASON, JENNIFER COLLINS, REBECCA BARRY, NAKKIAH LUI, ALICE LOUISE, MARNIE FOULIS, ANTHONY SKLAVOS, OSCAR HILLERSTROM, GREG BENZ, GAVIN MARSH, GLENN FRASER, TOM GLEESON, LUKE TORREVILLAS, CHRIS NELIUS, CAROLINE PEGRAM, MATT WALKER, DEMI SKOUFIS, KIM AYKHURST, JASON DULLOW, MICHAEL MCNALLY, NATALIE VAN DEN DUNGEN, KATE WITCHARD, AMANDA ARMSTRONG and MALCOLM

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## **WEB LINKS**

**Official Website - [horormoviedoco.com](http://horormoviedoco.com)**

**Facebook - [facebook.com/horormoviedoco/](https://facebook.com/horormoviedoco/)**

**IMDB - [imdb.com/title/tt5717610/](https://imdb.com/title/tt5717610/)**

**Official Trailer - <https://youtu.be/nqhHc2hJarc>**

**Red Christmas Film Trailer - [https://youtu.be/nzgvI\\_mrH-M](https://youtu.be/nzgvI_mrH-M)**

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