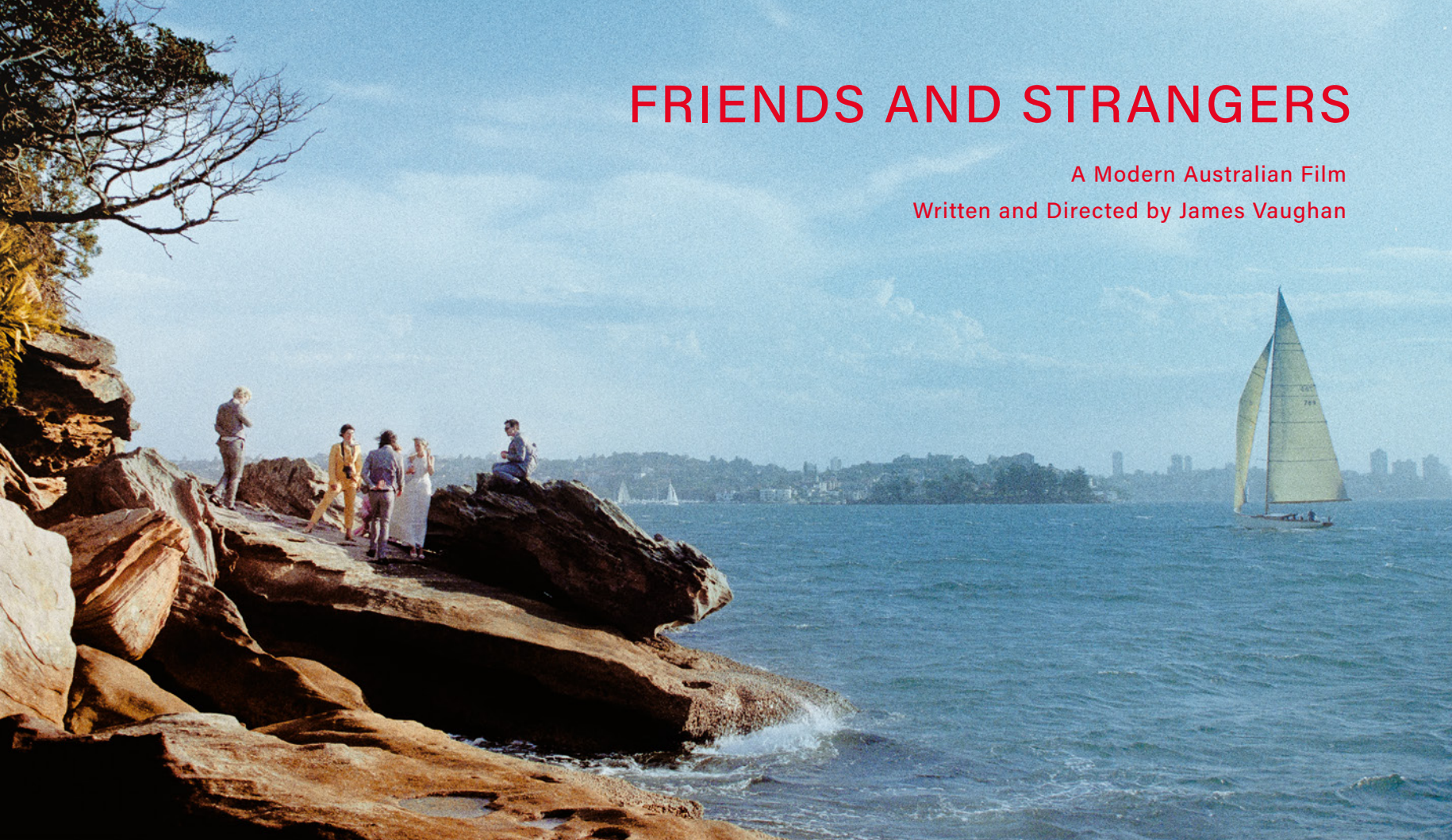


FRIENDS AND STRANGERS

A Modern Australian Film

Written and Directed by James Vaughan





CREDITS

Director / Writer / Editor **James Vaughan**

Starring **Fergus Wilson, Emma Diaz, Steve Maxwell, Poppy Jones, Greg Zimbulis**

Producers **Lucy Rennick / Rebecca Lamond**

Director of Photography. **Dimitri Zaunders**

Production Designer. **Milena Stojanovska**

Costume Designer **Olivia Simpson**

Sound Recordist **Gavin Marsh / Nathan Codner**

Hair and Make Up Designer **Amelia Fell**

Sound Designer/Mixer **Liam Egan**

Digital Intermediate Colourist **Yanni Kronenberg**

SYNOPSIS

Friends and Strangers is a surreal comedy-drama that explores displacement, disconnection and ennui in contemporary Australia through the eyes of two upper-middle class millennials.

Boldly framed and delicately layered, the film presents several sketches from life as experienced by Alice and Ray, two nearly-thirty drifters born into privilege but seemingly incapable of navigating the featureless ocean of casual employment, limp romances and half-assed entrepreneurial schemes.

Gingerly abandoning teenage daydreams of careers in the arts, both are grasping for a way to channel their advantages into something meaningful. But in a society built on simulated images, words, ideologies, choices...Where can authenticity be found?

This meandering, pensive search for the unfindable, and the misadventures that follow, cuts to the heart of *Friends and Strangers*.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Running time: 81 MINUTES

Exhibition format: DCP

Aspect ratio: 1.85:1

Shooting format: 2K DIGITAL

Sound: 5.1

Colour

Original language: ENGLISH

World premiere: IFFR/TIGER COMPETITION 2021



CAST & CHARACTERS



Fergus Wilson as Ray

"Should I have one of those as well?"



Poppy Jones as Lauren

"weeds, trash, roads"



Emma Diaz as Alice

"It's very attractive"



Dave Gannon as Miles

"You and I can't shit on the road"



Steve Maxwell as Wes

"I don't know what time it is, that's the thing"



Greg Zimulis as David

"That's been thinking"



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

A comedic, non-linear, cultural exploration with an oblique take on realism—in *Friends and Strangers* I wanted to probe the intellectual ennui in Australia's upper middle-class and draw a line from there to Australian society at large. There's both an inherent comedy and quiet horror to the petty, pestering tasks and tepid struggles for social validation that seem to dominate life in Sydney's comfortable inner suburbs. Shrivelled by a narcissistic, homogenous corporate culture, eroded civic connectivity and the endless, enervating pursuit of short-term, insecure work, so many individuals are lost in a desert of meaningless choices while the important questions about our genocidal origins and the future we imagine for our society and our world is always work for another day. Though rooted in this Australian context, much has been taken from Kafka's winding tales of bewildered individuals searching within and against haunted and centreless social systems.

There is a lot of myself in this film and I have great affection for the main character. Facing a fraught choice between a comfortable submission to hollow materialism and a lonely, precarious

investigation into (possibly doomed) alternatives, I feel a natural response is a kind of paralysis—to delay making any choice at all. Ray means well, but he always seems to think too much or not enough, and though he exists in the present his mind always seems to be somewhere else, in memory and speculation but never anywhere in particular. I don't think this is so unusual, we are all haunted by our pasts, just as we in the present are the ghosts haunting our future selves. Working with a largely non-professional cast was a means to access these drifting mental states in a direct and unembellished manner.

I wanted the film to turn slowly through its duration, as if on a wheel, from whimsy to dread, subjective to objective, past to present. Steady locked-off compositions frame characters as solipsistic voyagers in a complex and confusing world; strange encounters spiral outward with an undulating rhythm—situations rise uncannily from banal misunderstandings to absurdist farce, only to be contrasted with sparse zones that elasticise and disturb a sense of reliable perspective. *Friends and Strangers* is a kind of jaunt, delighting in the topographies of our cultural surfaces just as it attempts to peel the layers back.

James Vaughan

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

James wrote and directed the short film, *You Like It, You Love It* (2013) which screened in competition at the Berlinale, Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival and Melbourne International Film Festival, where he received the Swinburne Award for Emerging Australian Filmmaker and ATOM award for Best Experimental Film. In 2015 he was recipient of Screen Australia's Talent Escalator: Director's Acclaim fund. James was involved in establishing the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia's Contemporary Film Program in 2016, which brought together a range of critics, curators and practitioners to exhibit a free weekly program of bold, new cinematic voices. He founded Leitourgia Films in 2018.

FILMOGRAPHY

YOU LIKE IT, I LOVE IT (2013)





LEITOURGIA FILMS

Leitourgia is an Ancient Greek word meaning ‘deeds done among the people’. It was the means by which the citizenry directed concentrations of private wealth into valuable public works.

Leitourgia Films was founded in 2018 by writer/director James Vaughan and producers Rebecca Lamond and Lucy Rennick in Sydney, Australia. The company’s debut feature film *Friends and Strangers* will have its premiere at the IFFR in 2021.

Leitourgia Films is based within the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. Sovereignty was never ceded.





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