

The Craftsmen's Castle



More than just a castle.

The Craftsmen's Castle

A Film By Michael Woods

ABYSSINIAN PRODUCTIONS present a film by MICHAEL WOODS
Written by GABI MAFFEY and MICHAEL WOODS Presented by GABI MAFFEY
Assitant Directing and Cinematography by SAM NEAL
Editing by ELLA WASWO, LUKE DOUGLAS, and SAM NEAL
Sound by ELLA WASWO, NICOLAS PEGG, and ELAINE HAGUE
Executive Produced by DENNIS CHAPMAN and DEBBIE CHAPMAN
Directed and Produced by MICHAEL WOODS



Abyssinian Productions

PRESS KIT
40 MINUTES
NEW ZEALAND
2023

The Craftsmen's Castle



About the Film:

'The Craftsmen's Castle' is a documentary film that focuses on Chapman Castle. It's a middle ages styled house built by businessman Dennis Chapman and his wife Debbie Chapman. The documentary focuses on the history of the construction of Chapman Castle and its effects on architecture, design, engineering, environmentalism, and most importantly housing in New Zealand.

MICHAEL WOODS

Co-Writer, Producer, Director



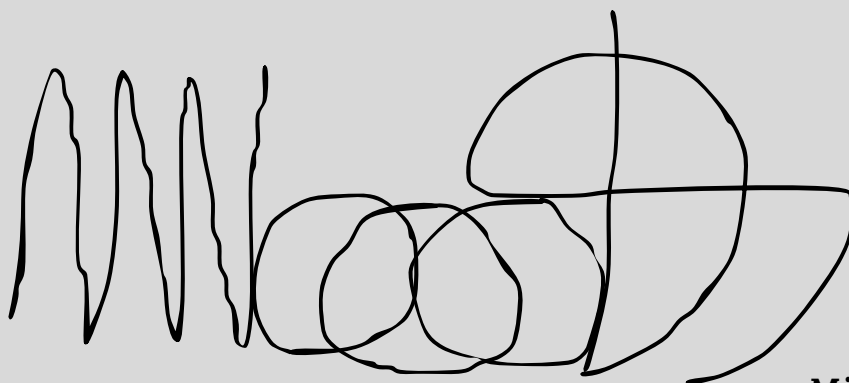
Michael Woods is a Canterbury based filmmaker, writer, actor, and drummer from New Zealand. Since 2015, Woods has been part of many theatre companies such as Dramasoc, Canterbury Repertory Theatre, Canterbury Children's Theatre, and Elmwood Players. He has also made many film projects under his production company of Abyssinian Productions. His most notable film project is *The Parcel*, which was shown as part of the 12th International Autism Congress in Nice, France in 2019.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

In December 2021, I was approached by Dennis and Debbie Chapman to make a documentary on the story of their mediaeval home suitably called Chapman Castle. They gave me a large amount of archival footage from Chapman Castle's construction from 2010-2013, filmed amazingly by Peter Somerville. Yet little did I realise the scale of that would entail with this documentary. While most filmmakers around my age would feel daunted by the aspect of this kind of production, I faced this daunting aspect head on. Leading to a two year adventure full of heartfelt stories, new perspectives of New Zealand history, and a middle ages styled sword fight.

A big influence for this film in the early stages of its production was Peter Greenaway's 1982 feature film *The Draughtsman's Contract*. Looking back at this there are a number of surprising parallels both me and the lead character of Mr. Neville. Both of us were commissioned to create art based on the homeowners own home and most importantly, both of us questioned the status quo of our societies. While I'm obviously not as conceited and Machiavellian like Mr. Neville who ends up paying for his indiscretions, both he and I both gained new perspectives of the world.

So, after two years of production. I'm happy as the director of this film to proudly present *The Craftsmen's Castle*. A film which I hope will serve as an influence for not just young filmmakers in New Zealand, but also young architects and engineers to shape New Zealand's architectural future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Woods', with a large, stylized flourish on the right side.

Michael Woods
Co-Writer, Producer, Director

GABI MAFFEY

Co-Writer & Presenter



Gabi Maffey is an emerging Documentary Filmmaker who finds inspiration in the whimsical and dramatic aspects of reality. Originally from Awhitu, now living in Central Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa, Maffey merges her background in architecture, visual design, and performance to tell stories. With a Master's in Architecture (Prof) First Class Honours from the University of Auckland, and a Documentary Directing Diploma from South Seas Film School, she integrates critical spatial thinking and poetic observation into everything she makes.

ELLA WASWO

**Editor, Lead Editor, Secondary
Camera Operator, & Sound Operator**



Ella is an Ōtautahi-based filmmaker and artist with an eclectic range of experience, from running a charity music festival, to managing a tattoo practice. She discovered her love for filmmaking in 2018 on a 48hours shoot, and pursued an Hons BFA majoring in Film, and was President of the Fine Arts Club at UC for two years. Ella has since worked in a range of industry roles, from producer to 1st AD to soundie, and is currently trying her hand at Content Creation for brands like The Arts Foundation and REnews.

NICOLAS PEGG
SOUND MIX
&
SOUND POST PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR



Beginning his career in sound as a live performance mixer for various bands since 1981, Nicolas Pegg has a four decade long career in working in sound for music, radio, television, short films, and documentaries. Along with serving as sound operator for TVNZ's *Fresh TV* and the Documentary Channel's documentary *Toe the Line: The Art of Robin Judkins*, since 2007 he has also served as Studio Operator and the founder of the video production company Prologue. Serving as both Sound Operator and Post Production Sound Supervisor for the 2016 documentary *Sumner Class: A Lifeboat Story* under Prologue.

His work in sound has also gained him national awards and international recognition too. He won the Best News Programme Award for Plains FM's "Radio Picnic" in 1993 along with the Supreme Radio Award and an Excellence Award for Music and/or Talent in Radio for the South Island Advertising Awards for "Pot Hole People" 1995. Nicolas Pegg also served as the Head of Department in sound for the 2022 Sukhvir Parmar short film *On the Edge of Hope* which was selected in 2023 as part of the New York Shorts International Film Festival, the HB Film Festival, and the Regina International Film Festival.

ELAINE HAGUE

SOUND EDITOR



Born and raised in Christchurch Elaine was intrigued to learn about this story which centred in her own backyard. She enjoyed learning about the environmental aspects of Chapman Castle while editing the film.

Elaine comes from a music background having completed a Bachelor of Commerical Music majoring in Music Technology from Massey University Wellington. She learnt the fundamentals of sound mainly from a music aspect but has since been able to adapt this for film. Elaine has a varied day job working in the music and events industry. From stagehand to venue technician to events assistant no two days ever look the same.

Some days she will oversee events in the theatre while others she is on stage moving backline for the next artist to perform or audio operating so a well-balanced mix can be heard for all. With this being her first film Elaine looks forward to other projects and being able to develop her sound editing skills further.



CAST & CREW:

Director

MICHAEL WOODS

Assistant Director

SAM NEAL

Executive Producers

DEBBIE CHAPMAN

DENNIS CHAPMAN

Producer

MICHAEL WOODS

Presenter

GABI MAFFEY

Interviewees

JON ALDRIDGE

MATT BLYTH

BOYD CHAMBERLAIN

DEBBIE CHAPMAN

DENNIS CHAPMAN

DEAN JOHNSTONE

PETER MAY

WRITERS

GABI MAFFEY

MICHAEL WOODS

CINEMATOGRAPHER

SAM NEAL

SOUND OPERATOR

ELLA WASWO

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

LUKE DOUGLAS

PRIMARY CAMERA OPERATOR

SAM NEAL

SECONDARY CAMERA

OPERATORS

LUKE DOUGLAS

ALEX LANG

ELLA WASWO

DRONE OPERATORS

JEFF HORNE

LUKE DOUGLAS

LEAD EDITOR

ELLAS WASWO

EDITORS

LUKE DOUGLAS

SAM NEAL

ELLA WASWO

SOUND POST-PRODUCTION

SUPERVISOR AND SOUND

MIX

NICOLAS PEGG

SOUND EDITOR

ELAINE HAGUE

COLOUR GRADING

SAM NEAL

MAKEUP

HOLLY REIANA

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE

SUPPLIED BY

PETER ELLIOT

PETER SOMMERVILLE

JOHN SELLWOOD

CAMPBELL LIVE

GREENSTONE TV

Director Q&A

1. HOW DID YOU FIRST MEET DENNIS & DEBBIE CHAPMAN?

I first meet Dennis and Debbie Chapman just over a decade ago. Dennis Chapman is a long time childhood friend of my mum's partner Graeme Randle, where I first meet both Dennis and Debbie Chapman at a social function. Both Dennis and Debbie also came along to the screening of my 2016 short film 'The Parcel', as part of a fundraiser to get me to the 12th Autism Europe International Congress in 2019. I had always been interested in seeing Chapman Castle up close and in person to look around when I finally got the opportunity to see it in December 2021. I was invited by both Dennis and Debbie Chapman where they explained to me that based on what I did with my 2016 short film The Parcel, they were keen for me to do a documentary about the construction of Chapman Castle. They showed me a large amount of video footage filmed greatly by Peter Sommerville that showed the construction of Chapman Castle from start to finish. Upon seeing this footage, I was hooked to make a documentary about Chapman Castle and to use Sommerville's great footage for something truly special. I was more than keen to take the challenge.

2. DID YOU FEEL DAUNTED BY HOW LARGE THE PROJECT WAS?

Considering that 'The Craftsmen's Castle' was the first film project where I had to work with a budget and a whole host of other things that aren't usually done with smaller projects like I used to do in the past, I did feel a little bit daunted at the beginning. A large amount of this feeling also came from the fact that I was both director and producer on the project, trying to juggle too large roles at once. By learning the hard way, I didn't fully anticipate how quite difficult doing both roles at once was going to be. Yet with this there was a massive positive that came out of this. I learned the importance of producing in film and how its importance in the film making progress should be highlighted greatly. I also learned so many new things for bigger film making projects as a whole which I will definitely use for my future projects too. The two most important I learned as a director are scheduling and budgeting. Scheduling helped me make my future projects work better logistically and budgeting helps ground me as a director in regards to what I can do.

3. HOW WAS YOUR PRESENTER AND PRODUCTION TEAM BROUGHT ON BOARD?

The main core production team that was brought on board was Luke Douglas, Sam Neal, and Ella Waswo. I worked with both Luke Douglas and Ella Waswo on Richard Townsend's feature film 'The Bostrom Scenario' where I was a production assistant and a featured extra during the production of Richard Townsend's film. Sam Neal was brought on board through a recommendation by Luke Douglas, bringing him on board after being impressed with Sam Neal's cinematography. I brought them on to the documentary as I was highly impressed with the work they had done. Now to find our documentary's presenter. Originally, I was thinking of presenting the documentary myself. Yet as I knew very little about architecture and engineering along with the desire of wanting to work more behind the camera. I decided that I had to find someone who not only had the ability to present in front of a camera, but also had to have the knowledge of architecture and engineering. Through auditions, we found University of Auckland graduate in architectural design Gabi Maffey. With her knowledge, presentation skills, and her unique style, she was the absolute perfect choice for the role of the presenter for 'The Craftmen's Castle'.

4. WHAT WAS ONE ELEMENT DURING THE PRODUCTION OF THE FILM THAT HELPED IT TRULY TAKE SHAPE?

The biggest element of the film that helped it truly take shape was the work of our presenter Gabi Maffey. I was blown away with her wide knowledge of architecture, architectural design, and engineering and the way she interviewed people for the film was always very down to earth and playful. Her approach as to how she wanted to interview people involved in the construction really helped shape the narrative structure of the film and help me lean forward more into my essay film influences rather just strictly being 'Grand Designs' or 'Grand Designs New Zealand'. Her work was great. If there was another person or me in front of the camera as the presenter, I don't believe that we would have the film we have now, it would not have stood out as well with a different presenter. Both Dennis and Debbie Chapman also wanted to have a young person in the presenter role which was a real advantage with Gabi Maffey in the role of the presenter too. An older presenter for the documentary would have not given the film's playfulness and the unique ability to make the informative fun as 'The Craftsmen's Castle' has done so with Gabi Maffey as presenter.

5. DID ANY OF YOUR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES IN FILM MAKING AND EARLY PASSIONS FOR FILM COME INTO PLAY DURING THE MAKING OF YOUR DOCUMENTARY?

When I look back at my early passions for film, I find that there are a lot of films that I really enjoy that use architecture as a major element of their works. Films like 'Metropolis' (1927), 'Playtime' (1967) '2001: A Space Odyssey' (1968), and 'The Shining' (1980) all use architecture to create not only a large amount of brilliant cinematography, but also use architecture as a major element in world building within their respective film universes. In many ways my experiences in doing Honours in Cinema Studies at the University of Canterbury helped build the foundations for the documentary.

I did my Honours paper on the films of Robert Bresson and Jacques Tati. As Tati's film 'Playtime' being also the film that fully launched my passion for film making it was more than a suitable choice. Tati's use of architecture is highlight prevalent throughout his filmography, his ability to turn ordinary buildings into a highly creative element by thinking like an architect in his films is brilliant. While I'm no Jacques Tati (I wish), His approach and philosophy of how he saw architecture within his own environment made me think about how I saw Chapman Castle with my environment too.

6. DID THE PRODUCTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY CHANGE THE NARRATIVE FOCUS AT ANY POINT?

Along with working with Gabi Maffey that allowed me to gain new perspectives on how I present the narrative focus in my documentary, one of my early influences when doing the planning for the documentary in a weird way became a case of life imitating art. Around the time when I was doing pre-production planning for 'The Craftsmen's Castle', I had recently watched a lot of films by British film maker Peter Greenaway. One of his films that influenced this project was his 1982 feature film 'The Draughtsmen's Contract'. I found myself almost living the story of that particular film. Like the lead character of Mr Neville, we are both commissioned by a notable individual to create a visual and highly creative project based around their own home, coming across unexpected challenges along the way. Funnily enough, I also share the same birthday as the actor Anthony Higgins, who played the lead character of Mr Neville. While I am no way as conceited and debauched as Mr Neville or faced such a grizzly fate as he did, It was interesting that an influence become a force that helped evolve my narrative focus during the production of the documentary.

7. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THOSE WHO WANT TO BECOME FILMMAKERS?

Despite still being in my twenties, in terms of advice that I would give to those who want to become filmmakers, I would say be prepared to make mistakes and make strong connections with those that you are working with. In this industry, mistakes are bound to happen as with any creative industry. To learn from those mistakes and build upon improving your projects so that they don't happen again is the important thing. Making strong work connections with those you work with are so important too, especially for young filmmakers.

I sometimes think that when it comes to being a film director, we focus too much on wanting to be a film director rather than focusing on how to be a film director. For me, being a film director is like being a manager. I follow the auteur theory of film directing and to a certain extent directing for live theatre too, yet I know that in both film making and theatre you can't achieve your vision with the help of others around you. Too many directors think like dictators. Those who direct like managers have thick skins, dictators don't.

8. WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES YOUR DOCUMENTARY STAND OUT FROM OTHERS IN THE GENRE?

When I started pre-production planning for this documentary, I just finished a year of Honours in Cinema Studies at the University of Canterbury where I largely watched a lot of essay films. Dennis and Debbie had used the story of Chapman Castle for a pilot for 'Grand Designs New Zealand' while Chapman Castle was still under construction, so for a lot of my early planning the main skeleton of the narrative structure of the documentary was based around TV shows like Grand Designs and its later variant of 'Grand Designs New Zealand'. Yet I wanted a more essay film approach. My experience through researching the genre of the essay film and the original intentions of the Chapman Castle pilot for 'Grand Designs New Zealand' made me realise that I wanted to try and make it different from TV shows such as 'Grand Designs'. Gabi Maffey really aimed her focus on the people involved in the construction and the advanced methods used in the construction as part of her role her presenter, very much moving away from reality TV elements and being careful not to focus too much on the medieval castle aspect of Chapman Castle. To quote Gabi, it's much more than just a castle.

9. ARE THERE ANY UPCOMING PROJECTS YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE?

In terms of upcoming projects I've got many, they are either currently on the backburner or reserved for when I'm further down the career path. Both Dennis and Debbie Chapman are interested in me making more documentaries about their other builds around New Zealand which will be great to do. In regards to more fictional narrative based projects, the one I'm really working on at the moment is a project called 'Chickentown'. It follows a young man who goes into the open world after spending his entire life in a nuclear fallout bunker with his dad, who believed in Y2K. In a sense, it's 'Mr. Bean' meets 'Twin Peaks'. A dark slapstick comedy series of sorts that follows the young man who later calls himself Belisarius, who over the course of the story becomes a Monsieur Hulot like figure. I've had this idea for over a decade now, and I'm at a stage where I'm happy with how the concept is now and how I want the overall character of Belisarius portrayed. His lack of 21st century knowledge and culture is made up for by his innocence in character and his ability to see the positive in anyone or anything.

Promotional Stills









Behind the Scenes







Enquiry Contact



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Director & Producer

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