

Media Release

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**Dame Kate Harcourt awarded "Best Actress" first prize for leading role in
Pacific Dreams at international film festival**

Dame Kate Harcourt has been awarded first prize in the Best Female Actress category for her leading role in the short film *Pacific Dreams* at the 2011 Rhode Island International Film Festival.

In *Pacific Dreams*, Dame Kate's character Grace is a new arrival at a rest home run by a stern head nurse. The short independent Kiwi film depicts Grace, an elderly and determined lady, striving to bring life into a rest home where residents exist, but don't live.

Director David Strong wrote, directed and co-produced the short film which was shot in Wellington. Seasoned actors Don Langridge and Tina Cleary also feature in *Pacific Dreams*' supporting cast.

As one of 200 films carefully chosen from over 4500 submissions in the Rhode Island festival, *Pacific Dreams* is gearing up to become an acclaimed success with its selection in other prominent festivals such as the 2011 New York City International Film Festival.

"I am very proud and happy for Dame Kate receiving such high-profile recognition for her work in *Pacific Dreams*. She is a beautiful and brilliant actress who brought depth and life to the film," said David Strong.

"Working with her was a pleasure, and her stunning performance is a testament to her acting craft. *Pacific Dreams* was inspired by my mother Shirley's time in a rest home, and Dame Kate really captured the essence of my mother's experience."

"At 84 it is hard to find the perfect role, but this role was inspirational for both me and other older people, and it had great personal meaning to me. It was a very moving experience" says Dame Kate, one of New Zealand's most accomplished and respected leading actresses.

"David was very generous and highly skilled. He's a director with a real vision for what he wants to say. I hope this recognition helps him make more films."

The award is the first Dame Kate has won for acting.

"I've never won an award for my acting before," she says. "I was the vice captain of the B-hockey team at school in the 1940's, and this sure beats that!"

The grand prize in the Best Female Actress category went to Oscar winner Melissa Leo for her role in *The Sea is All I Know*. The festival is one of ten Academy Award affiliated festivals in the USA.

Pacific Dreams was also accepted to compete in the Mobile SIFF Competition at the prestigious 2011 Shanghai International Film Festival in June, the largest Film Festival in Asia which received over 10,000 entries.

"It's a great honour for *Pacific Dreams* to be selected as a finalist in all of these film festivals. It is testament to the amazing work of everyone involved in bringing the film to life," David Strong said.

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Notes for Editors:

Director David Strong served in the New Zealand Army for 22 years as an armoured reconnaissance officer before retiring in 2006 as Lieutenant Colonel. He saw operational service in the Middle East, Sarajevo, Bosnia and East Timor, and was twice awarded the United Nations Commendation for Service to Peace.

David's other film credits include Military Advisor, *The Water Horse*, and a Director in the 48 Hour filmmaking contest.

David is currently writing a feature political thriller screenplay, *The Pilgrim*, which has received development funding from the New Zealand Film Commission. He is also writing another feature, *The Child Alone*, set in New Zealand and Poland during World War Two, and two short films.