



A SHORT FILM BY BRETT WAGNER

Filmed in the jungles, waters, and urban nightscapes of Oahu, Hawaii, CHIEF is a short film that defies categorization -- though if you had to try, you might call it a Polynesian tragicomic film-noir. CHIEF was written and directed by Brett Wagner, whose previous feature film, FIVE YEARS, played 30 festivals around the world and is currently in distribution. Producer Dana Hankins has a long list of Hollywood and independent film credits, including PICTURE BRIDE (Sundance '95) The cinematographer is Paul Atkins, who has spent twenty years shooting films in the natural world for National Geographic, and whose second-unit cinematography on MASTER AND COMMANDER helped earn that film an Academy Award. The editor, Jay K. Evans, has been the top commercial editor in Hawaii for twenty years. CHIEF features the performances of two first-time actors: Chief Sielu Avea, a genuine high-ranking Samoan Chief, and Ka'alaka'i Faurot, a startlingly talented eight-year-old actress.

Filmed entirely on the island of Oahu, Hawaii

FESTIVAL INFORMATION:

CHIEF had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in January, 2008.





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LOGLINE:

A highly ranked Samoan chieftain flees his village after the drowning death of his young daughter, and winds up a cab driver on the meanstreets of Honolulu, Hawaii.

SHORT SYNOPSIS:

Semu Fatutoa drives a taxi in Honolulu, Hawaii. Once he was a village Chief in Samoa, but tragedy compelled him to cover his tattoos and flee his home. Now he drives in circles, slowly forgetting his old life. But his old life is looking for him. And a young Hawaiian girl, separated from her family on the eve of a disastrous day, desperately needs his help.

LONG SYNOPSIS:

Honolulu, Hawaii—the crossroads of the Pacific. It’s the place you go if your own island isn’t big enough. It’s the place you go to disappear. Semu Fatutoa was once a highly ranked Samoan Chief. Technically, he still is; the tattoos shrouding his legs are immutable proof of the pain he endured to earn his title. But those tattoos cost him something else: His daughter, nine year old Aveolela, drowned in the ocean on the day Semu received the tattoos. Weakened by the grueling ceremony, he lacked the strength to swim out to save her. No one blamed him for her death, but Semu blamed the tattoos. Rather than assume his chiefly duties, he fled. Two years later and thousands of miles from home, Semu is the only cab driver in Honolulu with the rank of Chief. He drives in circles, keeps his legs covered, and slowly forgets his old life. But his old life wants him back. First, there is the mysterious Samoan staking out his apartment in Waikiki, calling him on the phone, following him home from the beach. Then there are the news reports: An earthquake on the Big Island threatens to unleash a tsunami on the city of Honolulu; anyone with any sense is heading for higher ground. Probably the Chief would go, too, except for the eight year-old Hawaiian girl wandering the city in her bathing suit. She has crossed his path twice today, and both times he let her go. But now the girl’s intrusion into his sequestered life begins to feel to Semu like a message. A calling. Any minute now, these streets will be silenced by a wall of water. Semu begins to realize that it’s high time he started living up to his title.

CHIEF

FILMMAKERS

BRETT WAGNER: DIRECTOR AND WRITER



Brett Wagner's first feature film, FIVE YEARS, tells a story of secrets and lies, fractured family, and unlikely heroism in a small Midwest town. Completed in 2002, FIVE YEARS became an official selection of 30 film festivals internationally, winning "Best Feature Film" at the Victoria Independent Film Festival, "Best Screenplay" at the Avignon Film Festival, and garnering "Best Picture" and "Best Ensemble Cast" nominations from the Ashland Film Festival. The film is distributed by CinemaVault Releasing. While attending New York University's graduate film school, Brett began writing and directing commercial projects. Eventually, commercial work drew him west -- way west -- to Honolulu, Hawaii, where he has directed spots for McDonalds, Starwood Resorts, AT&T Wireless, and many others. In 2007, he became a winner of the Filmaka.com competition for films under three minutes. Brett grew up in beautiful and misunderstood Cleveland, Ohio. He graduated summa cum laude from the University of Rochester, studied cinematography in Italy, and holds an MFA (and a great deal of low-interest debt) from NYU. He is currently at work on a script for Terrence Malick's production company.

DANA SATLER HANKINS: PRODUCER

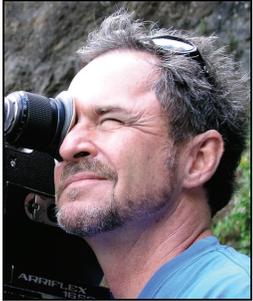


Hawaii based producer Dana Satler Hankins' theatrical credits include Hollywood features STAKEOUT, BIRD ON A WIRE, and SHORT CIRCUIT, as well as the critically acclaimed independent release, PICTURE BRIDE, winner of the Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival in 1996. Dana produced short films, THE LEMON TREE BILLIARDS HOUSE, winning the HIFF Hawaii Filmmaker Award, DANCING WITH THE LONG BONE and TRUE LOVE AND MIMOSA TEA, starring Cary Hiroyuki Tagawa and Tamlyn Tomita, released in 2006. Hankins' documentary work includes a stint at National Geographic Television, as well as production credits on projects for The History Channel and Discovery/The Learning Channel.

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PAUL ATKINS: DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY



From Antarctica to the tropical Pacific, Paul Atkins has spent twenty years capturing the world's cultures and wildlife on film. His internationally acclaimed cinematography has won numerous Emmys and British Academy Awards and has been featured on National Geographic Specials, BBC, NBC, ABC, TBS and PBS, and in theaters. In recent years, Paul has turned his cinematic attention to feature films, including TIDES OF WAR, Regent Cinema's first film production in Hawaii, and THE LAND HAS EYES, which played the 2004 Sundance Film Festival and was Fiji's submission for Best Foreign Film to the Academy Awards. On a forty-two day epic voyage around Cape Horn,

Paul shot the storm footage for MASTER AND COMMANDER, which won the 2004 Academy Award for Best Cinematography. Paul lives in Honolulu, with his wife (and fellow filmmaker) Grace.

CHIEF SIELU AVEA: LEAD ACTOR



Chief Sielu Avea, whose formal title—awarded to him by the Head of State of Independent Samoa—is Malietoa Tauasa Folo Sielu Avea, has been an entertainer and ambassador of Samoan culture for more than 20 years. He is a world-champion fire-knife dancer and has performed in dozens of countries. He has appeared on the Oprah Winfrey show, THE TONIGHT SHOW, MTV, and BBC Television. In 2002, he threw the flaming spear that ignited the ceremonial torch at the Olympic Games in Salt Lake City. Chief Sielu was born in the jungles of Savai'i in Independent Samoa, one of eight children. For years, his family lived off the land in complete isolation, farming taro and bananas.

Until he was five years old, Sielu had never seen a human being outside his immediate family. As a young man, he received a scholarship to visit New Zealand, and shortly thereafter came to Hawaii to study at BYU. When he was 25, the elders called him back to Samoa to endure an excruciating seven-day tattoo ceremony, after which he earned the highly coveted title of Chief. Chief Sielu has spent his life introducing the world to the fa'asamoa, the Samoan way, through comedy, music, dance, and his extraordinary abilities as a communicator. Chief will be Sielu's first starring role in a dramatic film.

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KA'ALAKA'IOPONO E. A. FAUROT (KAI): ACTOR



ger Ka'alaka'iopono E. A. Faurot (Kai) makes her screen debut in CHIEF. All of eight years old during filming, Kai has acted and danced (hule) her way across Hawaii's stages.

CHRISTINA SIMPKINS: EXECUTIVE PRODUCER



Christina Simpkins has worked in film for several years on both sides of the camera, as an actress and a producer. Most recently, she was an executive producer of the feature film ALL FOR MELISSA and of WAHINE O KE KAI, a documentary about a woman's heroic solo canoe voyage. The film caught the eye of Roger Ebert, who gave it an honorable mention at the 2005 Hawai'i International Film Festival. WAHINE is the first of a trilogy of documentaries about modern-day Hawai'i heroes. Christina has worked on the hit ABC show LOST as well as on NORTH SHORE, as both an actress and photographer. She also recently appeared in DETOUR, Brett Wagner's Addy-winning short film, commissioned by Starwood Resorts.

JAY K. EVANS: EDITOR



Editor: Jay K. Evans
Editing since: Early hammer & chisel
Occupation: Moving Image Stylist
Proudest accomplishment: Advertising Man of the Year, 2007
Hawaii Awards: Int'l Monitor Finalist, Tellys, Peles, Andys, Cines
Recent Edit: "Silent Years". Most down-loaded short at Atom Films
Favorite Moment: Editing a Chess Film with Orson Welles
Most interesting souvenir: Statue of St. Claire, Patron Saint of Television
Other Genres: You name it, I've cut it

Travel wish: Go to Sundance

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FILMMAKERS

GRACE ATKINS: CO-PRODUCER & SOUND MIXER



Producer and sound mixer Grace Atkins has spent decades of her career making films for the BBC and National Geographic in tandem with her husband, cinematographer Paul Atkins. Her recent work in the commercial and television arena includes LOST, two Sci-Fi Channel Original Movies, and projects for Regent Cinema, HBO and Showtime. Grace's many nominations and awards include Emmies, the BAFTA, NY Film Festival Awards, CINE, CINE Jury, and the CINE Master Series awards, along with a CAS nomination for sound mixing in 2005. She also took home "Best of Show" at the 2007 HAF Addy Awards for the short film DETOUR, which she produced for director Brett Wagner. Today, Grace looks forward to a successful festival run with CHIEF.

FREDDIE ANCHETA: SOUND DESIGNER



Young, up-and-coming audio engineer Freddie Ancheta jumped at the role of sound designer for the short film CHIEF. But don't let his youth and enthusiasm fool you. While renowned for his work in the commercial world, he is also a veteran in audio post-production for TV. His skill has been put to the test with ADR work for TV series such as NORTH SHORE, HAWAII, LOST and ROCKY POINT, along with audio post work for the TV comedy series THE TIDE IS HIGH. His documentary sound credits include the award-winning documentary ICE: HAWAII'S CRYSTAL METH EPIDEMIC. Freddie's award list is extensive, but he is most proud of winning his first "Academy Award":

third place at the Mililani Judo Academy Tournament.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS:

TRT: 21 minutes

SHOOTING FORMAT: Super 16mm film

SCREENING FORMAT: 35mm film

VIDEO FORMATS AVAILABLE: HDCam, DigiBeta, BetaSP, DVD

LANGUAGES: English & Samoan (with English subtitles)

THE SAMOAN TATAU:

Opening the film is a scene in which Semu, played by Chief Sielu, receives the traditional Samoan tattoo, covering the entire lower half of his body. Shooting this scene was one of the



biggest challenges of the project. It felt absolutely necessary to see the tatau needles entering the skin, and it wasn't obvious how we could fake this. Nor could we afford to take the production to Samoa to film the real thing. We were stumped. Then, months into pre-production, a call came from Sielu: He told us that Sulu'ape Su'a Petelo, the world's

foremost Samoan tufuga (tattoo artist) would be coming to Hawaii to tattoo a new chief living here. After much careful negotiation, we got permission to film this ceremony and then reshoot the event with Sielu taking the place of the new chief. We built a traditional Samoan fale (hut) in the lushest part of O'ahu, and a young man became a chief while our camera rolled. This was our first day of what would be an extraordinary production. Giving the moment special resonance is the fact that Sulu'ape Su'a is the very same tufuga who tattooed Chief Sielu more than 15 years ago. During the shoot, I thought Sielu's performance of the excruciating pain of a traditional tatau was particularly convincing. When I complimented him on it later, he told me that Sulu'ape Su'a had noticed "some things he wanted to fix" on Sielu's tattoo. The pain was real. Everyone left the set that day feeling they'd been part of something powerful.

- Brett Wagner, Writer and Director