



Noise

A film by Matthew Saville



Australia / 2006/ English / 109 min.
35 mm / 1:2.40 / Color / Dolby SRD

Distributor Contact:

Rebeca Conget
Film Movement

109 W. 27th St., Suite 9B, New York, NY 10001

Tel: 212-941-7744 ext. 213 Fax: 212-941-7812

rebeca@filmmovement.com

SYNOPSIS

This original thriller turns the genre inside out, and concentrates on the consequences suffered by the members of a suburban community who has just been hit by two heinous crimes, rather than on the crimes themselves. The police, desperate for witnesses, have to move to, and become part of, this closed community in order to get the people to slowly open up and forego their fear and untrammled mistrust of authority.

A young police constable, Graham McGahan, suffers from tinnitus, a chronic hearing problem, and applies for worker's compensation. To his chagrin, he is instead stationed at the police caravan in the town, near the crime scene. Living on the periphery of the investigation, McGahan crosses paths with the various people affected by the tragedies, and will gradually uncover an unraveling nightmare of guilt and suspicion that will involve him more than he could ever have imagined.

Noise deals with the response of an ordinary young man to the challenge posed when a community is affected by tragic events. The film shows we are at our best when the worst occurs.

FESTIVALS

WINNER – Best Film – Best Actor – Best Cinematography – Best Director – Best Editing – Best Music Score, Film Critics Circle of Australia Awards

WINNER – Best Sound Design, Australian Film Institute Awards

WINNER – Special Mention Matthew Saville, Leeds Int'l Film Festival

NOMINATED – Grand Jury Prize World Cinema Dramatic, Sundance Film Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION – Newport Film Festival 2007; Seattle International Film Festival 2007

CREDITS

Crew

Writer/Director	Matthew Saville
Producer	Trevor Blainey
Line Producer	Yvonne Collins
Cinematographer	László Baranyai
Production Designer	Paddy Reardon
Costume Designer	Kitty Stuckey
Sound Designer	Emma Bortignon
Sound Recordist	Philippe Decrausaz
Editor	Geoff Hitchins
Music	Bryony Marks

Cast

Const. Graham McGahan	Brendan Cowell
Lavinia Smart	Maia Thomas
Craig Finlay	Henry Nixon
Snr. Det. Noel Birchall	Nicholas Bell
Const. Caitlin Robinson	Katie Wall
Det. Melanie Ryan	Fiona Macleod
Snr. Const. Rhonda Harris	Maude Davey
Dean Stouritis	Luke Elliot
“Lucky” Phil Heydon	Simon Laherty

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

MATTHEW SAVILLE, Writer/Director

Matthew's films have screened in over two hundred festivals. His short feature *Roy Höllsdotter Live* screened in 2003 at the Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Locarno, Cork, Montreal and Commonwealth International film festivals as well as SBS television. In 2002 the script for the film was short listed for the Victorian Premier's Literary Award. In June 2003, the film won the Dendy Award for best short film (over 15mins) at the Sydney Film Festival, and Best Original Script for Television at the 2003 Australian Writers' Guild Awards, and was nominated for a Film Critics' Circle of Australia, and two AFI Awards. The film was voted best short film at the 2003 Lexus IF Awards, where Matthew was also honored with the Best Rising Talent Award.

Matthew has been a prolific contributor to the recent crop of Australian television sketch comedy, directing both *skitHouse* for Channel Ten and *Big Bite* for the Seven Network. He has also worked in television drama, directing *The Secret Life of Us* and *The Surgeon* for Channel Ten. In 2005 Matthew directed the very successful comedy *The Nominees*, which screened last year on the Sundance Channel, won the Rose d'Or for Best Comedy Series, and was nominated for best comedy series at the 2006 Banff Awards. It won two Logie awards in the same year.

Matthew has recently completed the libretto for a contemporary Opera, which will be performed this year by Chamber Made Opera at the Melbourne Festival. He is currently in post-production on *The King*, a biopic about television iconoclast Graham Kennedy.

TREVOR BLAINEY, Producer

In 1973 Trevor enrolled in Business Studies at Swinburne Institute of Technology in Melbourne. He spent the year playing pool and watching films and failing Business Studies. Terrified at the prospect of getting a job he then enrolled in and completed a degree in Economics at La Trobe University. Forestalling his real interests, he worked as an accountant for Coca-Cola AMATIL until 1986, when he took up the position of Finance Manager at the Australian Children's Television Foundation. In 1993 he left the ACTF to work as a freelance Production Accountant with a view to producing his own films.

As an accountant he has worked on nearly 30 films including *Three Dollars*, *Chopper*, *The Last of the Ryans*, *My Brother Jack*, *Crackerjack* and *After the Deluge*. In 2002, nearly 30 years after missing an Accounting 101 lecture to go and see *Play It Again Sam*, he produced his first film, a short feature called *Roy Höllsdotter Live*.

He is currently financing and developing a television series called *Bad Debts*, written by the multi-award winning crime novelist Peter Temple, featuring the character Jack Irish. His next feature is called *Rams To The Slaughter*, written by Marieke Hardy.

LÁSZLÓ BARANYAI, Director of Photography

László Baranyai was born in Budapest and began his career as a camera assistant for the Hungarian Film Company MAFILM. He studied at the Academy of Dramatic and Cinematic Art, Film and Television in Budapest, and worked on a number of features, shorts and documentaries before he immigrated to Perth in 1988. Since moving to Melbourne in 1992, he has been the DOP on a number of Australian features, shorts and television series, including *True Love and Chaos* and *Soft Fruit* and *Roy Höllsdotter Live*.

In 1996 The Hungarian Government awarded him with the “Tribute to Excellence”, a prize awarded to filmmakers living abroad for their contribution to the art of film making.

EMMA BORTIGNON, Sound Designer

Emma Bortignon has worked on eighteen feature films, including *Boytown*, *The Extra*, *The Old Man Who Read Love Stories*, *Innocence*, *You And Your Stupid Mate*, and *Crackerjack*. She has been nominated for two AFI Awards in the Best sound in a Non-Feature category for her work on *The Archive Project* and *Iraq My Country*, and was also a nominee in the Best Sound on a Non-Feature Documentary for *La Nina – Eye of the Storm*.

Emma has also worked on numerous TV movies, documentaries, short films and television series.

ABOUT THE CAST

BRENDAN COWELL (Graham)

Brendan stumbled upon acting by accident at 8 years of age, when he found himself cast in a commercial after being noticed while waiting for his sister. Then when a coffee urn fell on his head and burnt him on set at 16, he was convinced it was a sign from the gods and promptly enrolled in theatre and media studies at Charles Sturt University, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts.

Brendan's most memorable role to date has been as Tom in the critically acclaimed television series, *Love My Way*, for which he was nominated for the 2005 TV Week Silver Logie for Most Outstanding Actor in a Drama series. He is also an accomplished stage performer, appearing in a number of Sydney Theatre Company productions including *Dissident*, *Goes Without Saying* (directed by Andrew Upton), *Far Away* (directed by Benedict Andrews) and *The Shape of Things* (directed by Jeremy Sims).

Other film credits include 2003's *Deck Dogz*, *To End All Wars*, which starred Robert Carlyle and Kiefer Sutherland, and Samantha Lang's *The Monkey's Mask*, which was released in 1999.

Noise is Brendan's first leading film role.

MAIA THOMAS (Lavinia)

Newcomer Maia Thomas graduated from The Victorian College of the Arts in 2004 and makes her feature film debut as Lavinia in *Noise*.

Maia has been a revelation in this role, her first in a feature film, and has given a remarkable performance for a relatively inexperienced actor. She is sure to garner a lot of attention for this challenging piece of work

HENRY NIXON (Craig Finlay)

Gifted with a quality that Inside Film magazine described as "a mix of contradictions: charming, cheeky, passionate, intense", Henry Nixon has had no shortage of work in the six years since he graduated from NIDA in 2000. With a career already spanning theatre, film and television, he has displayed an enormous versatility that continues to attract directors and audiences.

Nixon made his feature film debut in 2003 as Nick in Cate Shortland's award winning *Somersault*, after appearing in Silverchair's music clip for *Miss You Love*, and *Albert's Chook Tractor* for Roar Film and SBS TV. His portrayal of Craig in *Noise* marks his most substantial role to date in a feature film.

Television credits include *McLeod's Daughters*, *Home and Away*, *Life Support* and a regular role as Sterling McCormack in Channel Seven's *All Saints*.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

For all its gory depictions of death and violence, perhaps the most chilling aspect of the script is the world in which it takes place. *Noise* is prosaic. It supposes that the horrors that unfold do so not in some cinematic facsimile of an urban dystopia, but in a place that is ordinary, familiar and unremarkable; a place that we instantly recognize as our own. So it is into *our* world that a monster has arrived. Just as startling is how familiar both the protagonists and antagonists seem. They are people we see in our everyday lives.

We aren't comforted by the notion that evil is visible, or that heroism is a trait. Nor are we sermonized that the police are good, decent, confident hardworking servants of the peace battling against conquerable or comprehensible wrongdoings. Wrongs cannot necessarily be righted. Deaths and betrayals aren't necessarily avenged. Instead, we are shown that great acts of courage, heinous acts of cowardice, and terrible, violent crimes are all committed by people not unlike you or me. Good and evil are not diametrically opposed. Such binary notions are quickly dismissed and the script, instead, invites us to vest faith in fractured characters pursuing a cold-blooded killer whose motives remain unknowable and inexplicable.

We're not offered any reasons or explanations for the killer's actions because, frankly, there are none – apart from the rather uninteresting reality that spree killers are almost invariably motivated by mental disorders that engender in them a chronic, narcissistic monism. They kill because they believe they have a right to salve their need to; such is how dear they hold their own lives, and how low their regard is for others'.

But in the mire we also discover how extraordinary we can sometimes become, through simple acts of kindness, uncharacteristic displays of strength, love, compassion and courage; that even in an imperfect world we still aspire to dignity, that the bravest among us are the few who forgive cowardice in others and rally to overcome it in themselves. In this world, heroes do casual labor on building sites and in fast food restaurants. So do the villains.

This is a parable about something very simple; decency. It is a story about the struggle not to become, but to *remain* a good person.

CINEMATOGRAPHER'S STATEMENT

As soon as I read the script, I knew that *Noise* would be a film that was different from anything else being produced in Australia; a film about all of us, our lives and our feelings. Coming from Eastern Europe, where filmmaking is far more political and social in its intentions, I felt privileged to be trusted with this project. I knew from the beginning that this was the kind of film I have always wanted to make.

Matt and I have very similar taste in films and creative ideals. We both love the adrenalin rush of risk taking and are always seeking new opportunities. I was fortunate to work with him on *Roy Höllsdotter Live*, and all the while *Noise* was in the back of our minds.

Matt knew long before production started that the visual style of *Noise* had to be driven by the emotional aspects of the film. The colors, the lighting, the camera movement, the framing, were all designed to follow and explain the emotional state of the characters. Despite all the common action-film elements in the script--a mass murder on a train, a fight in a dark alley, a shoot out between cop and criminal--Matt never intended to imitate the clichéd action movie model. The imperfections of the characters were of the greatest interest--the clumsiness of their actions, the realistic look of their surroundings, but, most importantly, their state of mind. It is this focus that makes *Noise* compelling to watch; an involving emotional journey rather than an action thriller.

With all of this in mind, we often committed ourselves to certain irrevocable decisions on set that were driven by the actors' performances. The staging of the scenes, the coverage, and use of the cinemascope widescreen format were all designed to psychologically involve the audience.

To achieve the film's dark and monochromatic tone we used mixed or incorrect color-temperatures with few primary colors. The tone changed as the drama developed, but we always kept the widest possible tonal range in the surroundings. The film-stock we used was Kodak 5217- 200T and Kodak 5218- 500T, without any special processing or modification in the handling of the negative, as we were determined to keep the analogue filmic look, despite the latest developments in digital technology. *Noise* was shot on super 35mm format to achieve the final 2.40 Cinemascope aspect ratio.

SOUND DESIGNER'S STATEMENT

It is not very often that a Sound Designer gets to work on a film where the sound is such a major focus of the storytelling. The title of this film and the creative challenges (especially the ringing sounds of tinnitus) posed by the script immediately drew me to the project. We wanted the film to be as much of an aural experience as possible, yet considering the very nature of tinnitus, we had to ensure that it wasn't too much of an assault on the audience. It was a constant experiment and refining process.

Much of my inspiration came from my sheer passion for sound and the infinite possibilities it delivers. Matt and I, along with the composer Bryony Marks, had many discussions at the beginning of, and during the process of, making *Noise*, to develop a very clear vision of where we wanted to take it. We started in a great place and every day presented us with a new set of possibilities. Our perceptions of characters began to change and new sounds developed. As the soundtrack evolved and more intricate layers were added, we too were discovering new ways to provoke responses to the story. In the end it was a combination of having a clear vision and being open to the synergies and ideas that were constantly evolving.

Noise differs from most projects I have worked on in many ways. I was involved from very early on, at script stage, and have been involved throughout the shoot and during the picture edit. This level of collaboration is not always possible in the filmmaking process for a sound designer. I worked very closely with the composer; we wanted to blur the lines between 'the music' and 'the sound'. Because we were both on the project from the beginning, we were able to plan and discuss experiment and swap sounds. As a result, we had the time to explore different ways our sounds could work together and we are very proud of what we achieved.

PARK CITY '07 INTERVIEW | Matthew Saville: "What fascinated me was the pall, the painful, unspeakable silence that consumed the country..."

by indieWIRE (January 21, 2007)

[EDITORS NOTE: indieWIRE is publishing two interviews daily with Sundance '07 competition filmmakers through the end of the festival later this month. Directors with films screening in the four competition section were given the opportunity to participate in an email interview, and each was sent the same set of questions.]

Please introduce yourself...

I was born in Adelaide, South Australia in 1966. When I was nineteen, I dropped out of a Bachelor of Arts degree and moved to Melbourne to study Graphic Design, but even then, my passion was for film. My plan was to cut my teeth in advertising and then move on to features - like the 80's British directors, **Ridley Scott**, **Alan Parker** and **Adrian Lynne** did. Like most good plans, it went horribly awry, and I instead spent seven miserable years working on catalogues for a department store.

How did you learn about filmmaking?

I never got anywhere near a motion picture camera until I finally summoned the courage to quit my day job and apply for film school. I was 29 when I undertook a Postgraduate degree in Film at the **Victorian College of the Arts School of Film and Television**. After graduating, I divided my time between writing, and shooting short, self-funded films. In the late 90's a sort of de facto collective of unemployed Melbourne cineastes emerged (sometimes in cafes, mostly in bars) and, without really noticing, I became one of them. We worked day jobs, and then, on weekends, worked on each others' films. Most weekends I was working on a film in some capacity - assistant director, sound recordist, runner, caterer, grip, gaffer, best boy... All unpaid, of course, but I loved every minute of it. And the directors of those films returned the favor by doing grunt work on my films.

So somehow - through begging and borrowing, but mostly stealing - this small enclave of wannabes managed to produce twenty, thirty, sometimes forty films a year, for little more than the cost of stock and processing. The films were as rough as guts, but they were ours. Somehow, all this led to a gig directing sketch comedy for TV, and I've been in the fortunate and enviable position of being employed as director ever since. I can only hope this good fortune continues. It's the best job on the planet.

How did the initial idea come about for "Noise"?

We describe the film as a psychological drama. It has genre elements, undeniably, but the intention of the film is that it is a character study. It is about ordinary people cast into extraordinary circumstances. It is, I hope, a film that celebrates humanity.

The script has evolved a great deal since, but I started writing the screenplay the day after the **Port Arthur Massacre**, a tragic morning in August 1997 when **Martin Bryant**, a lonely and deeply troubled young man, killed thirty five people in a shooting spree at a popular tourist destination in Tasmania.

I wasn't interested in the event itself. What fascinated me was the pall, the painful, unspeakable silence that consumed the country in the days and weeks afterward. I felt the

same collective grief on September 12. What fascinates me most is our resilience, and the strength and nobility we can summon through the process of grieving.

What is your approach to filmmaking?

I saw some graffiti once that read "life is mostly preparation and mopping up". I think the same can be said about the process of filmmaking. As a director, you divide the vast majority of your time between concocting plans and abandoning them when they go horribly awry. I do storyboards, but rarely refer to them afterwards. They are useful to do, I suppose, because they force you to think visually, and to immerse yourself in the detail of the script's universe. Generally, though, I prefer to concoct shooting strategies on set, blocking the camera around what the actors generate in rehearsals. I try to remain flexible, and to minimize the encumbrances the task of filmmaking can often create for actors. I've seen the technical necessities of filmmaking suffocate some performances, so I try to create a working environment for the cast that is relaxed, that celebrates their craft and invites them to trust their own instincts.

Often a location, or an unexpected moment, can influence the film in ways greater than any that can be prepared. The way a road can shimmer at night after an unexpected downpour, for instance, or an anecdote related by a crew member, can often inform what ultimately appears on screen. I relish those happy accidents and try to be open to them, and to recognize them when they come.

What are your overall goals for the project?

I suppose, if I had a goal for the film, it was that it would be honest. I'm wary of honing a film to appeal to a perceived audience, because I believe audiences, universally, respond to stories told passionately, unapologetically and truthfully.

How did the financing for the film come together?

After a long development process supported by **Film Victoria and the Australian Film Commission**, "Noise" was given production funding by Film Victoria and the Film Finance Corporation of Australia, after a distribution sale to **Madman Entertainment**, and a licensing sale to television broadcaster, **SBS Independent**.

Madman's support for the film is really what activated the other funds. It is a first for them to be involved in a film from script stage, and it was a bold move on their part to support it. I'm also incredibly grateful to SBS Independent for their support of the film.

"Noise" also represents one of the first fruits of a change in policy at the Film Finance Corporation. It was among the first projects to be "green lit" under what is known as an "evaluation stream". Previously, the body's policy was to support films that had raised 40% of their budgets, regardless of the quality or nature of the film. The "evaluation stream" allowed them to give higher levels of support to projects that had merit but would be, for whatever reason" difficult to finance.

The wonderful thing about the film's selection for Sundance is that it vindicates their support.

What were some of the biggest challenges you faced in either developing the project or making the movie?

We didn't want to make a film that was easy to categorize. Even after completing the film, I find it difficult to describe. The script was often criticized for "subverting genre norms" and "undermining audience expectations". By the same token, some readers enjoyed the script for exactly the same reasons. "Noise" wasn't a film we could pitch as a commercial exercise. The fact that we intended to cast relative unknowns exacerbated this. Very few Australian films have turned a profit, because there is only a population of 20 million people, so there is often pressure to create work that will "travel" well. This can sometimes mean that films are honed to appeal to a broad audience. Some films suffer as a result. We were keen for the film would find an audience outside of Australia, but we were not prepared to lose the film's particular, Antipodean voice in order to do so. We wanted to create a portrait of the Australians, our national character. We wanted to make an international film with an Australian voice, and this was often a difficult proposition to make.

What do you hope to get out of the festival?

Since being invited to Sundance, I've been regaled with stories about "the Sundance experience". It sounds exciting and intimidating. I'm looking forward to meeting filmmakers from around the globe, seeing their films. As the Sundance screening will be the World Premiere I'm looking forward to watching my film with an audience.

Describe the moment you found out that you were accepted into Sundance.

I got an SMS from the Producer, **Trevor Blainey**, saying we were in. I still have that message on my phone. I will never delete it. My first instinct was to nearly burst into tears, but I'm an Australian male, so I suppressed it and went with my second instinct, which was a growing suspicion that we were exploiting some typographical or administrative error. To this day, I wonder whether there's a really great film called "Nose".

What is your definition of "independent film"?

I guess there are two answers to this question. The straight answer is, "anything produced outside of the studio system". But if that was the case, every film made outside the United States and Bollywood would, by definition, be independent. I feel there is another definition though, which postures an argument about an "independent spirit". But this isn't easy to define. I believe there are studio pictures with an independent spirit, just as there are "indie" films without it. For me, an independent film has a voice. And this voice speaks with honesty.

What are some of your favorite films, and why?

"**It's a Wonderful Life**" will always be my favorite film, mostly for sentimental reasons. It is exquisite. Otherwise there is an ever changing list, the vast majority of which were made in America during the '70s. The work of Altman, Lumet, Coppola, Scorsese, Ashby, George Roy Hill et al, remain as luminous and modern as the day they were photographed.

I also enjoy British films of the 80's. "**Withnail and I**", and "**Local Hero**" from Handmade Films, or anything produced by **David Puttnam**.

This might sound parochial, but **Peter Weir** is yet to make a film that isn't a masterpiece. Of contemporary filmmakers, I admire the work of **Michael Winterbottom**, **PT Anderson**, **Michel Gondry**, **Michael Mann** and **Spike Jonze**.

In general, though, I share the sentiment expressed by **John Cassavetes**. I just love films, and am grateful there are people who create them.

What is your top ten list for 2006?

I have a son who will be two in February. In 2006 I made a feature, a TV movie and a short film, so I only managed to see one film this year. I say this to my shame. There's a long list of films I want to catch next year. The one film I did manage to see was Paul Greengrass' "**United 93**", which I thought was an extraordinary achievement.

What are your New Years resolutions?

Buy thermal underwear. See more films.