

A map of British Columbia, Canada, showing a red route line that starts in the north near Revelstoke and winds south through various towns and lakes. The route passes through or near towns like Salmon Arm, Vernon, Lumby, Coldstream, Nakusp, and Slocan. The word "Mile" is written in large red letters, and "Zero" is written in even larger red letters below it. In between, the text "a film by Andrew Currie" and "Anagram Pictures presents" is written in black. The map background is light blue and white, with various geographical features labeled.

**Mile** a film by Andrew Currie  
Anagram Pictures presents **Zero**

Promotional Material

MICHAEL RILEY CONNOR WIDDOWS AND SABRINA GRDEVICH  
PRODUCTION DESIGN JOHANNA MAZUR DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ROBERT ASCHMANN  
CASTING BY CAROLE TARLINGTON DOROTHY SZYMANSKA JOHANNA RAY CLAUDIA SMITH  
EDITOR REGINALD HARKEMA MUSIC COMPOSED BY DON MACDONALD SOUND DESIGNER JAMES GENN  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS BLAKE CORBET ELIZABETH YAKE JENNIFER KAWAJA JULIA SERENY  
STORY BY ANDREW CURRIE MICHAEL MELSKI SCREENPLAY BY MICHAEL MELSKI  
PRODUCED BY TRENT CARLSON BLAKE CORBET DIRECTED BY ANDREW CURRIE

# Credits

baby will	GABRIEL CASTELLO CORRY	set decorator	DAVID TURGEON
allison	SABRINA GRDEVICH	assistant set decorator	ELKE BRANDSTATTER
derek	MICHAEL RILEY	on-set dresser	MIRIAM BELL-IRVING
will	CONNOR WIDDOWS	set dresser	CLIF PROWSE
blue haired bully	DEREK BAKSTAD	set dressers	GENEVIÈVE BRIDGES
stacey	KATHERINE FANE		EMMA CURTIS
pete	ERIC BREKER		JILLY GEER
bartender	JOHN MURPHY		DANIEL JENSEN
rcmp constable	JEAN GUY ISIAH		OSHEEN HARRUTHOONYAN
girl in schoolyard	YADIRA CORBET		CHRISTINE MOHAMED
park ranger	CONAN GRAHAM		RYAN NICHOLS
infant will	KOA NELSON		KIM SAWYER
			JEN SWANSTON
production manager	ERIN SMITH		AMANDA THOMPSON
first assistant director	JOHN-PAUL HOLECKA	art department assistant	SHANE BONNEAU
second assistant director	MICHAEL MAITLAND	carpenters	MARTIN DAHINDEN
third assistant director	DIMITRIUS SAGRIOTIS		STEVE HOLECKA
			JAMES PICHÉ
intern producer	KEVIN EASTWOOD	scenic painter	GERALD ABRAMS
director's apprentice	JASON JAMES	set painter	LEITA EDWARDS
production coordinator	BOB CHRISTIE		
assistant production coordinator	KIMBERLY LEAR	camera operator	BRIAN JOHNSON
office production assistant	DAVID NIXON	1st assistant camera	ANDREW COPPIN
		2nd assistant camera	JON ORNOY
script supervisor	LISA RERRIE	camera trainees	AAMIR GHANI
location sound mixer	CRAIG STAUFFER		ADRIENNE RICHARDS
boom operator	MURRAY FORWARD	video playback	BENNY BACH
			JIM BACH
costume designer	KRISTIINA VATAJA		
assistant costume designer	STACEY HOOPER	gaffer	PETER K. MOHR
key hair & make-up	DINA WIEDEMAN	genny operator	ROB HASTINGS
assistant hair & make-up	RUTH CONYBEER	lamp operators	DAVID BILLINGTON
			ANTHONY JACKSON
property master	ALISON BLUE CROSS	daily lamp operator	TYLER HEPPLÉ
assistant property master	JASON HAGEMEISTER	key grip	RYAN PILON
		best boy grip	SANDY MACDONALD
		grips	LIONEL HEBERT



BRIAN SHIELDS  
 daily grip SERGIO PETRE  
 rigging grip MICHAEL TASCHEREAU  
  
 camera car KEVIN BOYKO  
 KEVIN WEBER  
 location manager DEAN STOKER  
 assistant location manager PETER J. MUNRO  
 location scouts TERRY BROOKS  
 REGINALD HUBBLE  
 location production assistants NADINE BRUCE  
 STEPHEN CASS  
 ANNELI EKBORN  
 DEBBIE FORBES  
 ALICE HANAK  
 ALICE NORMAN  
 RANDI SCHULTZ  
 TODD TELAWSKY  
  
 production consultant PAUL BARKIN  
 story editor MAUREEN DOREY  
 production accountant PATRICK MOKRANE  
 assistant accountant MICHELLE LEE  
 unit publicist LESLEY DIANA  
 unit photographer CAROL RACICOT  
  
 stunt coordinator ED ANDERS  
 stunt double (will) KATHY HUBBLE  
 stand-in SCOTT WITTY  
 extras casting JAMES FORSYTH  
  
 tutor NAOMI AKUNE  
 first aid & craft services MIKE "KRUSTY" SANDYKE  
 catering WHAT A DISH CATERING  
 chef TRACEY BROOKER  
 assistant chefs GEORGES BOURQUE  
 DANIEL ROSS  
 PATRICK VIGARS

transportation coordinator DEAN FITZPATRICK  
 transportation captain BOBBY PRASAD  
 drivers BRUCE ABBOTT  
 JEREMY ALEXANDER  
 ALBERT ARMSTRONG  
 BRENDA HALL  
 WALLY JANZEN  
 KELLY PEARSON  
 REGGIE SINGH  
 JOE SWAMPY  
  
 security BILLY TARKANEN  
 WAYNE GAINES  
 LASZLO NYERGES  
 HEATHER STEELE

#### SECOND UNIT CREW

location sound mixer DAVID McNIGHT  
 gaffer KEVIN RANKIN  
 key grip DAVE HUTTON  
 best boy grip JEREMY NITCHE  
 grips TIMIA DIAZ  
 LIA WIEBE  
 catering JOE SWAMPY  
 assistant chef BILL SWAMPY

#### POST PRODUCTION

post production supervisor KEVIN EASTWOOD  
 assistant film editors MICHAEL DOWSE  
 ROSS FERGUSON  
 second assistant editor GARETH C. SCALES  
 avid editing facilities COMET POST  
  
 re-recording mixers DEAN GIAMMARCO  
 TYLER BERRIE  
 DARREN "DUTCHIE" GILMORE  
  
 dialogue editor JOHN TAYLOR  
 effects editors PAT HASKILL  
 KERRY UCHIDA  
  
 background editor TIM PETERS

### POST PRODUCTION con't

assistant sound editor EVANI GOLL  
technical assistants JON McLEERY  
CHRIS FAIRFIELD  
foley walker DON HARRISON  
IAN MACKIE  
sound post production facility WESTERN POST  
western post manager NICOLE THOMPSON  
dolby sound consultant TREVOR WARD  
  
film lab & post production services RAINMAKER DIGITAL PICTURES  
colour timer DANA NEVILLE  
negative conforming BERT BUSH EDIT HOUSE  
film opticals CINEMATTE INC.  
digital video to film transfer DV FILM  
optical transfer CHACE PRODUCTIONS INC.  
titles and end credits photography AL SENS ANIMATION LTD.  
post production accountant TRACY ASHE  
payroll services TVD TELEVECTOR ENTERPRISES  
legal services ROBERTS & STAHL  
accounting services ELLIS FOSTER  
insurance JONES BROWN & ASSOCIATES  
completion guarantor THE COMPLETION GUARANTOR

### SPECIAL THANKS

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BC Branch of the ACTRA Performers Guild

# The Cast

## **MICHAEL RILEY – Derek**

Michael Riley starred as Brett Parker on the highly acclaimed alliance Atlantis/CTV series Power Play, winning Gemini Awards for Best Actor in both 1999, and again in 2000. His other television credits include The Outer Limits, The Prince (Gemini nomination for Best Actor 1996), The Helsinki Roccamatios (Gemini Award for Best Actor 1996), Due South (Gemini nomination for Best Supporting Actor 1996), Street Legal, and To Catch a Killer (Gemini nomination for Best Actor 1993). On the big screen he has appeared in Sturla Gunnarson's Diplomatic Immunity, (Genie nomination for Best Supporting Actor), Steven Spielberg's Amistad, Lawrence Kasdan's French Kiss, and was the lead (with co-star Robbie Coltrane) in the critically acclaimed feature film, Perfectly Normal.

## **SABRINA GRDEVICH – Alison**

Sabrina Grdevich has starred in such acclaimed independent films as Washed-Up and Johnny (1999 Toronto International Film Festival), and The Fourth Floor (1997 Sundance Film Festival), and most recently in Steven Spielberg's A.I. – Artificial Intelligence. On the small screen Sabrina has starred in such shows as Get Real, DaVinci's Inquest, Once a Thief, F/X, and Traders, for which she received a Gemini nomination for Best Supporting Actress. She also starred in the television films Little Criminals, for which she received a Gemini nomination for Best Supporting Actress, and Hard Times: The David Milgard Story, for which she won a Gemini Award for Best Supporting Actress. Sabrina has also appeared onstage in the Stratford Theatre Festival productions of Hamlet, Measure for Measure and Uncle Vanya, and in the DuMaurier Theatre production of The Old Man's Band, for which she won a Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding Performance.

## **CONNOR WIDDOWS – Will**

Despite his young age, Connor has amassed a diverse body of work including feature roles in Damaged Care for Showtime, The Hostage Negotiator for the USA Network and Liberty Stands Still for Lions Gate Entertainment, along with several Hollywood productions including, Say It Isn't So produced by the Farrelly Brothers (20th Century Fox) and Freddy Got Fingered directed by Tom Green (New Regency). On the small screen, Connor Widdows has starred in the CBS mini series Talking to Heaven. His television credits include roles in the 20th Century Fox productions Millennium and Harsh Realm, First Wave (Sugar Entertainment), So Weird (Showtime/Disney), Cold Feet (NBC) and the MOW First Target from Columbia Tristar Television.

## Production Notes

Anagram Pictures presents *Mile Zero*, a theatrical feature film that bravely explores the journey of a man unable to accept the end of his marriage. Driven entirely by his emotions, Derek Ridley (Michael Riley) goes on a desperate journey with his young son, Will (Connor Widdows) up into the Rocky Mountains where he believes a wilderness utopia will be found.

Dedicated to bringing *Mile Zero* to the screen, are the producing team of Trent Carlson and Blake Corbet (Anagram Pictures), executive producers Elizabeth Yake (*The Shoemaker, Desire*), as well as Jennifer Kawja, and Julia Sereny (*New Waterford Girl*). This group of talented award-winning producers combined their skills to help guide *Mile Zero* through the two-year journey to completion.

*Mile Zero* is director Andrew Currie's first feature film following his award winning short films *Night of the Living*, *Persistence of Memory* and *The Sudden Walk*. It is also the first feature by Halifax-based writer Michael Melski, who wrote numerous award-winning plays including *Joyride*, *Hockey Mom*, *Hockey Dad* and, *Caribou*.

Producer Blake Corbet remembers the first time he read the script for *Mile Zero*, "the script gave me the kind of two-day hangover I got after watching *Streetcar Named Desire* for the first time. I had to make it. I believed Derek was the kind of character who would not easily be forgotten." Producer Trent Carlson, involved in the development of the project since its inception added, "I have never seen two people (director Andrew Currie and writer Michael Melski) work more passionately in an artistic collaboration before and it shows!" says director Currie, "Michael's and I worked really well together. Because we had come up with the story together, we were really in sync as writer and director. He's a really great writer and very bright, which made the process of getting to the core issues in the film that much easier. In the end one of my biggest concerns was how am I going to convey this depth of character on film? It was really gratifying when Michael finally saw the film and loved it. He felt it really captured the essence of the script."

Once the funding was in place, (through the generous support of Telefilm Canada, the Canadian Television Fund, British Columbia Film, and presales from MovieCentral, The Movie Network and Showcase Television), casting began in earnest.

Several talented casting directors from all over North America were engaged in the search for the essential lead role. For Los Angeles, Johanna Ray (*Blue Velvet*, *Twin Peaks*), for Toronto Claudia Smith, and for Vancouver Carol Tarlington and Dorothy Szymanska.

After searching for several months, Andrew met actor Michael Riley while casting in Toronto. "*Mile Zero* was a special script in that it had such a complex, contradictory central character. It was a role that deeply attracted some actors, but also pushed some away. We always talked about this being a project where we would know when the right person came along because of how they reacted to the material. Michael was definitely one of those actors. The audition in Toronto went fine, but it was the depth of our conversation about the character that really impressed me, he just understood Derek so completely. When I got back to Vancouver, Michael and I had a long conversation on the phone, and that's what I think really sold me. He was so passionate about the role he understood the depths of the character so completely that I knew he was the right choice as soon as I hung up the phone. When Blake and Trent saw Michael's audition, plus his reel of previous work, they were immediately convinced."

Says producer Carlson, "We believed in him from the beginning, and Michael delivered on every level. He pushed himself to the limits. His commitment to the role of Derek, forms the basis of a performance that is definitely going to be talked about."

When it came to casting the role of eight year-old Will, the search went right across the country, and ended back in Vancouver. After seeing dozens and dozens of children, Connor Widdows came in for an audition with Casting Director Carol Tarlington and director Currie. "It was immediately evident that Connor was the right actor to play Will. He had this amazing ability to express the vulnerability that was essential to the role." said Currie. Producer Blake Corbet adds, "He had that look in his eyes like there was something buried so far inside you could never guess what it was. The scene I saw him audition for was a climactic moment in which he confronts Derek, calling him a liar, and accusing him of wrecking the family house. His performance really shook us all up and even though Connor was largely untested in long form drama we decided to take a chance on him. During production he proved as tirelessly committed as Michael, and once you pointed the camera at him he just disappeared into the role of Will."

As production loomed closer, the role of Allison had yet to be cast. Toronto Casting Director Claudia Smith suggested an ex-Toronto actor who had been living in LA - Sabrina Grdevich. There was no time to audition her, but her reel showed a wonderful range, and the kind of realness that Andrew was seeking. She was sent the script and based on a phone conversation with Andrew, she was cast," said Blake Corbet. "She understood what was at the heart of the story, where Derek's character was coming from. She understood the level of Derek's love and the complexity of a love that is both profoundly deep and pure, but also unhealthy and destructive" said director Currie.

Adds Producer Corbet " It doesn't matter how many times you watch *Mile Zero*, (and I've watched it a lot) you never stop finding new things that Sabrina is up to. I was amazed I didn't see a single moment that she recycled in her portrayal of Allison. I think this is very rare for an actor to bring that kind of freshness to every role."

Anagram managed to attract some wonderfully talented people on *Mile Zero*, Director of Photography Robert Aschmann, Camera Operator Brian Johnson, Production Designer Johanna Mazur and Editor Reginald Harkema, all joined the production in August, 2000.

Says director, Andrew Currie, "I had worked with Bob Aschmann several times before, and we were very comfortable working together. Our process began by watching films together and simply talking. My biggest influences tend to be European. The *Dreamlife of Angels* by French filmmaker Erik Zonka really impressed me. It had a wonderful style of cutting forward in time, yet always maintaining emotional continuity, as did *Breaking the Waves* by Lars Von Trier. Both of these films did something that was at the centre of what I wanted to accomplish – to tell a character driven story that cut to the emotions as opposed to honouring visual continuity. I wanted the emotions to dictate the pace and the rhythm of the film."

The entire Anagram team was impressed with Production Designer Johanna Mazur. Says producer Carlson, "I can remember when the crew arrived at the end of the road to shoot the final climax of the film, and we all saw the cabin that Johanna and her department had built. Everyone thought it had been there for thirty years! She had patched together this incredibly authentic cabin with old boards and pieces of scrap metal, and help from the local community and people she had met in the valley we were shooting in. It was like the story had suddenly become real. The entire art department



impressed us over and over again throughout the entire production!"

The shooting of the film went through such diverse locations as New Westminster, Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, North Vancouver, and up into the mountains near Pemberton, British Columbia. "It was a pretty crazy schedule," continues producer Carlson, "we had locations all over the lower mainland and up into the mountains. Plus a young actor who needed to be schooled three out of eight working hours, per day. But we got it finished on time and budget, and that felt great."

Once principal photography was completed, editing began with director Andrew Currie and editor Reginald Harkema. "Editing with Reg was really challenging and exciting for me" said Currie. "He is very bright and a gifted editor with a strong sense of what he believes is right. But he always honoured the directorial choices I was making. In the end, we both agreed that the film was stronger because of our collaboration in the edit room. I'm really looking forward to working with him again."

Sound Designer James Genn had first come to light as a sound editor on Lynne Stopkewich's *Kissed*, and then later as Sound Designer on Reg Harkema's *A Girl is a Girl*, and Stopkewich's documentary *Lilith Fair*, and her next feature film *Suspicious River*. "We're a pretty inbred group in Vancouver," laughs Currie. "Working with James was great. He brings a tremendous amount of creative energy to the table. He's very expressive with sound and very good with music."

James had suggested cutting the sound at Western Post in Vancouver. "Nicole at Western Post was tremendously supportive of us. We had done our short film *Groomed* at Western, and worked with sound mixer Dean Giamarco, and he was great. Everyone there was incredibly committed to the film," said producer Carlson.

Don MacDonald (*Kissed*, *Shoe's Off*, *Last Wedding*), did the music for the film. "Don is so talented and humble at the same time, it's a real pleasure to work with him," says Currie, "he takes all feedback in stride and always surprised me with the level of music he was composing in a relatively short period of time."

*Mile Zero* was shot in 25 days from September 27th until October 31st, 2000 in numerous locations throughout Greater Vancouver and up in the mountains near Pemberton, British Columbia, Canada.

## Short Synopsis

Derek Ridley is a father with a remarkable capacity to love, but whose emotional fragility makes him feel unworthy of love himself. When his marriage breaks down, he starts making reckless attempts to get his family back, eventually hatching a desperate plan to take his young son to the Rocky Mountains where he believes a wilderness utopia will be found. Initially the adventure represents an exciting and cathartic sense of freedom for father and son, but as the narrative crashes between past and present, and the stakes continue to rise, Derek's world of denial and half-truths are challenged in the most unexpected of ways.

## Synopsis

**"The most frightening and beautiful place is the human heart"**

Derek Ridley's marriage has ended. Cut adrift and floundering he finds himself desperately unable to cope without the love of his wife Allison and his eight year-old son, Will. He begins taking reckless and wrong-headed measures in an attempt to get his family back, revealing darker truths about himself and giving us a glimpse into why the marriage failed in the first place. As Derek begins to feel cut-off from any hope of reconciliation he constructs a self-deluded world of half-truths and deceptions, a web of denial that protects him from painful realities.

When he discovers that Allison has moved on with her life and started a new relationship, Derek's obsession with regaining his family accelerates with devastating effect. Convinced that her new boyfriend is a threat to his son, Derek devises a rash plan to take Will to the Rocky Mountains where he believes they can survive together in a secluded wilderness, building a cabin and living off the land like pioneers. Derek fantasizes that once he's created a new home, Allison will come back to him and they will become a happy family once again – far from the city and the realities which have forced Derek into his painful solitude.

Initially the adventure represents a cathartic sense of freedom for Derek. But as the film crashes back and forth between past and present the stakes continue to rise, for Derek who's vain attempts to regain love and family become more radical and severe, and for Will who soon finds himself a very small boy on a very adult journey.

Derek does his best to turn the kidnapping into an exciting adventure. Gifts, junk food, and risky fun all help to sustain the journey, but as Will's need for his Mother grows and his recognition of his Father's delusion begins to surface, Derek finds himself facing an adversary he never expected.

*Mile Zero* is the poignant tale of a man with a remarkable capacity to love but who feels unworthy of love himself, and who lets fear and desperation rule his actions. As the journey darkens and his son begins to suffer the hardships of being dragged through an adult's grief, Derek is finally forced to confront his actions and ultimately himself.

# The Creative Team

## **ANDREW CURRIE - Director**

Andrew Currie has earned international success with a series of award-winning short films, playing at festivals around the world and selling to such prominent broadcasters as Canal Plus (France), Channel Four (UK), Telepiu (Italy), and Showcase Television (Canada). He has written several feature screenplays, including *Fido* (Mainline Pictures); *Tripping Jack* (development funded by Telefilm Canada, FUND, and awarded a 1999 Praxis fellowship); and *Sperm*. In 1997, after graduating from the Canadian Film Centre's Director Resident Programme, he won the Telefilm Canada Award for Best Director at the Vancouver International Film Festival, for *Night of the Living*, Best Short Film at the Victoria International Film Festival, and won a Golden Sheaf Award at the 1998 Yorkton Film Festival. In 1999 he was nominated for a Gemini Award for his direction of *Twisteeria*, a half-hour comedy made for YTV. *Mile Zero* is Andrew's feature film directorial debut.

## **MICHAEL MELSKI - Writer**

Michael Melski is an award winning playwright and screenwriter. His plays: *Joyride*, *Hockey Mom*, *Hockey Dad*, and *Caribou*, have all performed to critical acclaim across Canada. He was resident at the Canadian Film Centre in 1996. His television credits include Gemini nominated *Straight Up*, *Street Cents*, and the pilot *Pier 19*. His film credits include several short dramas which have had success at numerous festivals around the world. He is currently developing and writing the TV series *Stanley's Palace* (Sienna Films/CTV), and the comedy feature film *Touch and Go* (Chronicle Pictures).

## **TRENT CARLSON - Producer**

Trent Carlson has written, produced, and directed several short films. These include *Round The Corner*, (Grand Prize—1991 Canadian Student Film Festival, Montreal), *The Station* (Special Mention, Turin International Film Festival), *Groomed* (screened at 1997 Sundance Film Festival, Honourable Mention at the 1996 Vancouver International Film Festival). Trent has also directed four episodes of the animated series *Beast Machines* for Mainframe Entertainment (Alliance Atlantis, YTV and FOX TV). Trent's feature film scripts include *Expired* (development funding from Telefilm Canada), *Featherman* (development funding from Telefilm Canada and 1998 Praxis fellowship), and *Children and Idiots*-(development funding from Telefilm Canada and BC Film).

## **BLAKE CORBET - Producer/Executive Producer**

Blake Corbet has written, produced, and directed several short films, most notably *The Chain*, starring Molly Parker (broadcast on CBC, WTN, TMN, distributed in Europe by Synchro 2000). Blake has handled North American distribution of the controversial sell-through video, *The Human Aquarium*, as well as the critically acclaimed British feature *Underground* (broadcast on Alliance's Showcase). Blake's feature film script *El Camino* has received two levels of development funding from Telefilm Canada, and BC Film. He has also produced and directed several acclaimed theatre plays, including Tennessee Williams' *The Two Character Play* (garnering two Jessie nominations, and one Jessie award for best actress) and *Knives in Hens* by David Harrower (1999 Cream of the Fringe).

## **ELIZABETH YAKE - Executive Producer**

Elizabeth Yake has produced several award winning films including the short drama *The Feeler* (Yorkton Golden Sheaf Award for Best Actor), the feature *Shoemaker* (Winner - Audience Award and Ecumenical Award, Mannheim International Film Festival) and the documentaries, *Mémoire Moire des Souvenirs/Remembering Memory* (Winner Telefilm Canada Award for Direction, Winner Best Directing, Hot Docs!) and *BP: Pushing the Boundaries* (Winner Special Jury Citation, Toronto International Film Festival; Winner Best Biography and Best Editing, Hot Docs!). Elizabeth recently completed her sixth film,

the international co-production feature film *Desire* with producer Eberhard Junkersdorf (Tin Drum). Her company, Subjective Eye was founded in 1995 with writer/director Colleen Murphy and focuses on director-driven feature films and documentaries, with an emphasis on international co-productions.

### **JULIA SERENY - Executive Producer**

Julia founded Sienna Films in 1991. Her producer credits include: the feature film *April One* (starring David Strathairn), the documentary series *Hidden Children*, (co-produced with October Films, UK, Gold Plaque—Chicago International Film Festival), the one-hour CBC documentary, *Black, Bold And Beautiful*; feature-length documentary *Erotica—a Journey Into Female Sexuality* (TV Ontario). In 1999, Julia produced *New Waterford Girl*, with partner Jennifer Kawaja (Alliance Atlantis, directed by Allan Moyle), premiered at the 1999 Toronto International Film Festival. (The Toronto Star's "Favourite Canadian Film," The Globe & Mail wrote: "consistently clever, thoroughly entertaining"—won Best Canadian Feature, and Best Produced Film, 1999 Atlantic Film Festival. It also played at 2000 Sundance Film Festival.

### **JENNIFER KAWAJA - Executive Producer**

Jennifer began working in the industry in 1986. She was one of the original founders of Winter Films where she wrote, directed, and produced many short dramas and documentaries, including the one-hour drama *The Other Prison* (Silver Plaque - Chicago International Festival and broadcast on CTV and CBC). She also produced *:30 Second Democracy* (which aired in Canada to excellent reviews, and is distributed internationally by Jane Balfour Films), and directed two films for the National Film Board. She attended the Canadian Film Centre's Feature Film Producers' Lab, before joining Sienna Films as a partner in 1996. She produced *New Waterford Girl* with partner Julia Sereny .

### **ROBERT ASCHMANN - Director of Photography**

Bob Aschman has photographed some of Western Canada's most acclaimed independent films. His feature film credits include *A Girl is a Girl*, directed by Reginald Harkema, *Rollercoaster* directed by Scott Smith, *Kitchen Party*, directed by Gary Burns, and *The Next Station* directed by Chaker Ayadi. His short film credits include the Sundance Film Festival favourite *Groomed*, directed by Trent Carlson, *Keys To The Kingdoms* (Winner Best Short Film, Vancouver International Film Festival 1998), directed by Nathaniel Geary, and *Win, Place or Show*, directed by world-renowned video artist, Stan Douglas.

### **REGINALD HARKEMA - Editor**

Reg Harkema has edited some of Canada's hottest independent films, including, *Tail Lights Fade* directed by Malcolm Ingram, *Kitchen Party* directed by Gary Burns, *Twilight of the Ice Nymphs* directed by Guy Maddin, and the *Grocer's Wife* directed by John Pozer. He has received two Genie nominations for Best Achievement in Editing for *Last Night*, directed by Don McKellar, and *Hard Core Logo*, directed by Bruce MacDonald. His directorial debut, *A Girl Is A Girl*, which he also edited, played at numerous festivals worldwide and was recently released by Mongrel Media in Canada.

### **DON MacDONALD - Composer**

Don MacDonald has composed music for some of Western Canada's most acclaimed filmmakers. He scored all of Mark Sawyer's short films, including *Stroke*, *Hate Mail*, and the 1999 Cannes Film Festival Award winner for best short film, *Shoes Off*. His feature film credits include the Bruce Sweeney films *Live Bait* and *Dirty*, the Lynne Stopkewich films *Kissed* and *Suspicious River*, and Scott Smith's *Rollercoaster*.

## Director's Notes

Being a single parent this story was very close to my heart. *Mile Zero* is about someone unable to accept the end of a relationship – something I think we can all relate to on a certain level. But Derek is different, he is someone who loves very deeply, yet never feels he's given enough love in return. At his core, he has a great fear of being abandoned, of being alone, which creates in him an almost insatiable need for love. This creates a powerful internal contradiction in his character. He is someone who loves deeply and passionately and will do anything for the other person, but who is also unable to trust that the love he's given in return is genuine.

I wanted to make a film that explored a character driven entirely by his emotions – that revealed what was true about this man, that he was this beautiful, horrible, loving, hateful, joyful, angry, passionate, contradiction of a human being. Someone who at their core had feelings that were too intense, too close to the surface, and he suffers, and those around him suffer, because of it.

What was compelling for me as a director, was finding a way to show the wall of Derek's denial slowly being chipped away by the journey, by Will, by Derek's memories, and especially by Derek himself. What I loved about Derek was that he had a conscious drive that was very clear – obsessively clear – but his unconscious drive was in direct opposition, which created a wonderful level of internal conflict that inevitably spilled into the drama.

Visually, the idea of moving from the city up into the mountains was very exciting to me. I wanted to have a sense of leaving the city behind, for something more simple and pure – the beautiful Rocky Mountains, something Derek could sell to Will as a utopia where everything could be good again. The irony of course is that the further they get away from the noise and stresses of the city, the more desperate the journey becomes and the more Derek has to face himself.

I wanted to visually express the sense of Derek being at, or crossing thresholds throughout the film. You'll often see him trapped in a frame that's inside the camera frame – a doorway, a window, usually outside of where he wants to be.

Another motif that runs through the film is the idea of salvation. There are religious icons that play quite quietly in the background of the journey, and are meant to indicate a sense of possible salvation for Derek, that he is completely unaware of. This is a journey where he has to face himself, and can't do that until he literally hits bottom. Which of course he does in the wilderness, which has a strong primal quality that was intended to help strip away any illusions that Derek was still clinging onto.

I've used video in nearly all my short films, usually in ways in which people use technology to distance themselves from their emotions. In *Mile Zero* video functions both as a sense of memory, something that Derek is either re-experiencing in the moment or remembering in his mind, and also as a form of voyeurism. What drew me to using this level of technology in *Mile Zero* was that although it is generally used as a way of monitoring or catching someone in a criminal or immoral act, Derek uses it as a way of getting closer to his son. The irony of course is that what he uses as a way of being closer to his son ends up being the thing that reveals another man in Allison's life, accelerating Derek's emotional descent.

In a sense, Derek's obsession with video, his need to record real events and watch them again and again, is part of his problem. He uses the home video moments that he captures as a way of dwelling in an idealized reality of the past – instead of facing the truth in the present, that his relationship has ended and that he must move on.

In terms of structure, I felt it was very important that the story be told in a non-linear form. The central reason being that when someone experiences grief it's not from a rational place, it's not clean and logical. We tend to think around painful things, often in disjointed fragments that are sometimes quite irrational. I wanted the visual style of the film to match that emotional sensibility.

When we were making *Mile Zero*, we seemed blessed. The weather, the light, the dark, everything and everyone seemed to be in perfect sync. Everyone on the crew talked about it. It was as if we all wanted exactly the same thing, to tell this story. And in that sense I would say I've never had a better collaboration.

*Mile Zero* is a film that explores family, the nature of love and how we define it, and the act of denial, and breaking through that denial. I wanted to make a film that provoked an audience to ask questions rather than to try and provide answers. We live our lives through our relationships, they are what define us, something Derek forgot at some point, and finally regains in the end.

## Technical Notes

**type:** dramatic feature film  
**film negative format:** 35mm colour  
**printed film format:** 35mm colour  
**film stock:** Fuji F-500 high-speed tungsten-balanced colour negative film  
Fuji F-250 mid-speed tungsten-balanced colour negative film

**aspect ratio:** 1.85:1  
**length:** 92:26

**camera:** Arriflex Cameras and Zeiss lenses  
**sound:** Dolby Digital  
**year of completion:** 2001  
**country of production:** Canada

**shooting days:** 25  
**shooting dates:** September 27 – October 31st. 2000  
**locations:** Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada  
Pemberton, British Columbia, Canada

**production company:** Anagram Pictures inc.

**WORLD PREMIERE** 2001 World Film Festival – Montreal

**Available rights:** all rights available

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## The Critics

"A brave new drama . . . tight, gritty, and honest."

**John Griffin, The Montreal Gazette**

"The festival standout at the Montreal World Film Festival."

**Matthew Hays, The Globe and Mail**

"A brilliant, brilliant film! Provocative... both deeply moving and shocking as it explores the boundaries of the human heart."

**Eramelinda Boquer,  
CJAD 800 AM – News Talk Radio, Montreal, Quebec**

"Recalls the late John Cassavetes' unsettling depictions of men going over the edge. Michael Riley's performance is scary and deeply touching."

**Maurie Alioff, Take One Magazine**

"Michael Riley gives a superbly modulated, carefully crafted performance. Currie is a skillful and imaginative filmmaker."

**Barbara & Scott Siegel,  
Siegel Entertainment Syndicate – New York**

"A striking feature film debut . . . haunting and poignant."

**Diane Burgess, Vancouver International Film Festival**

"The film refuses to sensationalize or sentimentalize . . . Powerhouse performance by Michael Riley."

**Ken Eisner, The Georgia Straight**

"Mile Zero is a heartbreaking look at a man in free fall, and Riley's delivery of the movie's central anguish is note-perfect."

**John T. D. Keyes, Syndicated Film Columnist**

"reminiscent of Atom Egoyan's The Sweet Hereafter... Connor Widdows gives Haley Joel Osment a run for his money!"

**Julie Crawford, North Shore News**

"Michael Riley gives a possessed performance in Andrew Currie's impressive debut feature."

**Marke Andrews, Vancouver Sun**

"Precisely acted and beautifully shot, Mile Zero is an accomplished and illuminating film"

**Lia Renaldo, Atlantic Film Festival**

"An impressive directorial debut . . . a structurally and emotionally complex story [that] handles a difficult subject with warmth, compassion, and even humour."

**Peter T. Chattaway, Vancouver Courier**

