

The Plains, a film by David Easteal

Produced with the support of Belfort International Film Festival Entrevues post-production support [Films en cours]
Cineli Digital, La Puce A L'Oreille, Poly Son Post Production, Studio Orlando and Arc Edit,
with marketing assistance provided by Screen Australia
Featuring Andrew Rakowski, David Easteal and Cheri LeCornu

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY Simon J Walsh

SOUND RECORDISTS Steven Bond and David Easteal

POST-PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR Pierre Huot

MUSIC SUPERVISOR Jemma Burns

SOUND DESIGNER Nick Batterham

SOUND RE-RECORDING MIXER Matthieu Langlet

COLOURIST Olivier Fontenay

PRODUCED, WRITTEN, DIRECTED & EDITED BY David Easteal



**OFFICIAL
SELECTION**

INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
ROTTERDAM
2022

THE PLAINS

Every evening a man in his late 50s commutes home at the end of the working day in the outer suburbs of Melbourne. As the seasons pass in gentle rhythm we observe dramatic events of his life as well as mundane quotidian details, and learn more about the man, his inner conflicts and the relationships in his life—with his wife, his mother, deceased sister, and a younger co-worker whom he occasionally drives home. Within the microcosm of the car the film ultimately becomes a meditation on the passage of time, memory, work, and how love and the relationships in our life sustain us.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Completion date	2022
Screening format	DCP 2K
Duration	180 minutes
Image	Colour
Aspect ratio	1.78:1
Sound	5.1
	English
Subtitles	FR / EN available
Filmed	Melbourne, Australia
Camera	Arri Alexa Classic
Lenses	Zeiss Master Prime
Sound recorder	Sound Devices 788
Microphones	Sennheiser MKH 50
	Sanken CUB
	Sanken COS-11

CONTACTS

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Pascale Ramonda
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Production
David Easteal

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CAST / CREW

Andrew Rakowski *Andrew*
David Easteal *David*
Cheri LeCornu *Cheri*
Inga Rakowski *Inga*

Producer, Writer, Director & Editor
David Easteal

Director of Photography Simon J Walsh
Additional Camera Operator David Rusanow
Camera Equipment Gear Head
Grip Equipment Lighthouse Rentals
Sound Recordists Steven Bond, David Easteal
Consultant Producer Isaac Wall

Post-Production Supervisor Pierre Huot
Music Supervisor Jemma Burns
Music Supervision Company Level Two Music
Radio Content Producer Adelle Mills
Editorial Consultant Luca Cappelli

Colourist Olivier Fontenay
Colour Grade Assistant Phoebe Taylor
Project Manager Olivia Carolan
Colour Grade Facility Arc Edit
VFX Artist Eugene Richards
VFX Facility Parallel Post
Sound Designer Nick Batterham
Sound Re-Recording Mixer Matthieu Langlet
Re-Recording Assistant Louis Deurre
Project Managers Charles Vallette-Viallard,
Patrick Long
Sound Re-Recording Facilities La Puce A l'Oreille,
Poly Son Post Production

Conforming & HD Mastering Julien Petri
Online & Mastering Facility Studio Orlando

Technical Manager Frédéric Busnel-Joncour
Project Manager Martine Scoupe
Subtitling Supervisor François Minaudier
DCP Mastering & Subtitling Facility Cineli Digital

Title Design Žiga Testen

Radio Presenter Jon Faine
Radio News Presenter Sarah Jane Bell
Radio Guests Henry Belot, Julian McMahon,
Christos Tsiolkas
Radio Talkback Callers
Leslie Bell, Kirsty Bennett, Marlise Brenner,
Stephen Brenner, Fiona Douglas,
Larry Gage, William Gwynne, Annie Paliwal,
Gillian Rogers, Ian Rogers

MUSIC

“Cheree (1998 Remaster)”
Composed by Martin Reverby / Alan Vega
(Control / © WC Music Corp. By kind permission of
Warner / Chappell Music Australia Pty Ltd)
Performed by Suicide
(P) 1998 Revega Music Company
Under exclusive license to Mute Records Ltd,
a BMG Company
Licensed courtesy of BMG Rights Management
(Australia) Pty Ltd

“That’s When I Think of You”
Written by G Frost / E Weideman
(Origin Music Publishing Pty Ltd / BMG Rights
Management (Australia) Pty Ltd)
Performed by 1927
Licensed courtesy of ORiGiN Music Group

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I first met Andrew when we worked together some years ago at a community legal centre in the outer suburbs of Melbourne. Andrew started driving me home from work on occasions and an unlikely friendship slowly developed. Over the course of a year I learnt about Andrew's life, both through our discussions and by hearing some of the telephone conversations he had with his wife and his mother. His mother's dementia worsened over the year and she passed away. I left that workplace but remained in contact with Andrew and our commutes home formed the basis of the film. We filmed approximately once each month over a year. The content of each shoot was loosely scripted in the month preceding the shoot – based on what had occurred years prior, as well as more recent events, while remaining open for digressions to occur spontaneously – and was comprised of re-creating real events, documentary and fiction. Through the process the film evolved in a very dynamic way, and unintended themes present in the film started to take shape.

The film explores Andrew's life through the repetitive action of commuting home at the end of the working day. It's a liminal time where the commuter is in effect doing little, moving through the city to get to home, together with thousands of others yet alienated from them. In the solitude of the car's interior, work-life can linger despite being physically left behind. The approaching home-life can be anticipated and can also be drawn into the space through disembodied telephone calls. Talkback radio provides some connection to the greater community. Whereas in a traditional road movie the car is a machine for liberation on the open highway, it functions in Andrew's everyday life as a vehicle to transport him between work and home as part of a recurring quotidian rhythm. In making the film I sought to explore the rhythm of the everyday commute, and to use it to create a rhythm unique to the film, to some extent free from the manipulations and limitations of traditional storytelling.

I conceived of filming the project by way of static takes from the same perspective – from the backseat of the car looking forward. I have always found the car to be a fascinating place for interpersonal communication – as both driver and passenger are facing forward, not looking at each other – in a similar way to the analyst and lying on the analyst's couch. From a pragmatic perspective I did not want Andrew to be able to see the camera, so as to retain the openness of communicating in a car, but still wished for Andrew to be in the frame as much as possible. The camera observes from behind, in a similar position to that of the analyst, or of another passenger. This angle would, *prima facie*, present an obstacle for a character study – as most of the time we connect to someone's interior world through their face. In the film we are restricted to Andrew's eyes reflected in the rear-view mirror when his face is illuminated by the streetlights or the sun. However I found we become more attuned to the subtle changes in his body language such as the way he sits, the tilt of his head, wrinkles around his eyes and the tone of his voice.

From this fixed perspective the car's windscreen is constantly present within the frame, creating a pure documentary element in the film – it is always possible to observe what is occurring on the streets Andrew is driving down. An element of chance therefore entered the

makeup of each shot and a number of happy coincidences occurred throughout the filming process regarding what is documented on the exterior streets. This frame within the frame establishes a dynamic between the busy exterior world and the relative stillness of the car's interior. It also creates a dynamic between the pure documentary being observed through the windscreen and the 'fiction' of what is being depicted in the car, a compositional blend of documentary and fiction – a composite attempted in the film's narrative as well.

I wished to make a film exploring the passage of time, and filming in this way provided an opportunity to capture the changing nature of the outside world over the course of the year. Filming occurred at the same time, the end of the working day, across 12 consecutive months. Changes in the seasons passing, the weather, the composition of the clouds, the leaves on the trees, the colour and intensity of the light and sky across a year's duration were all keenly observable. The physical environment can be seen in some places to change dramatically over the year, as vacant plots slowly develop into residential complexes. I wished to explore the element of time and its elasticity, which often disappears in favour of narrative progression in cinema – and therefore filmed uninterrupted in real-time. I was interested in the sensation and rhythm of the passing of time this created – certain parts of the film seem to pass slowly, while others pass rapidly – meanwhile the presence of the digital clock on the dashboard highlights the uniform forward progression of time.

Aside from the evening commute, the other area of Andrew's life depicted in the film is the country property he and his wife stay at on the Western plains of Victoria. The location of the plains functions in the film as a place of solace for Andrew and Cheri, where we learn they feel most content and connected to life – a transitional space between their home life in Melbourne and the city where their parents reside, Adelaide. It's a sparse landscape, so flat you can almost see the curve of the earth, and watch the passage of time unfold as the sun sets on the horizon. Memory and time are major themes in the film – both of which can also be seen metaphorically as endless plains. The film explores the time of life when, as middle-aged adults, Andrew and Cheri's parents both pass away. It's an age previously explored by Seamus Heaney, who in *Seeing Things* used the metaphor of the (parental) roof being taken away from the barn, and suddenly the sky/infinity, his own mortality, being exposed above. For me the image of Cheri and Andrew alone on the plains, without children and now without parents, is a very important one in the film. Above the vast flat landscape of the plains on which they sit, the infinite sky extends.

David Easteal

November 2021



DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

David Easteal (b. 1986) is a Melbourne based filmmaker. He studied law and literature at the University of Melbourne, and currently practises as a barrister at the Victorian Bar.

His short films screened at various international festivals, including the New York, BFI London, Chicago, Kiev Molodist, Sofia and Singapore film festivals. He received the Award for Emerging Australian Filmmaker at the 2015 Melbourne International Film Festival.

His first feature-length film, *The Plains*, received the Films en Cours post-production support award at Belfort International Film Festival Entrevues. *The Plains* premiered at International Film Festival Rotterdam 2022 as part of the Tiger Competition.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2022 *The Plains* (180')
- International Film Festival Rotterdam
- ...
- Awarded the Belfort International Film Festival Entrevues, Films en cours post-production support prize
- 2015 *Monaco* (13')
- New York Film Festival
- Chicago Film Festival
- Belfort International Film Festival Entrevues
- ...
- Awarded at Melbourne International Film Festival, Award for Emerging Australian Filmmaker
- 2011 *The Father* (16')
- BFI London Film Festival
- Molodist Kiev International Film Festival
- Hamburg International Short Film Festival
- Sofia International Film Festival
- Melbourne International Film Festival
- ...



